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Allegiances

Disclaimer: These books feature a mild amount of blood and gore. If you are sensitive to these themes, please read at your own risk.

Be sure to read The Dying Forest before this book!

ALLEGIANCES

[image]

SUNCLAN

LEADER Dawnstar- Golden brown she-cat with green eyes

DEPUTY Cinderflame- Dark gray she-cat with amber eyes

MEDICINE CAT Pebblestep- Gray and white she-cat with blue eyes

Apprentice, Honeypaw

WARRIORS *(toms and she-cats without kits)*

Crowfur- Black she-cat with blue eyes

Rainears- Black she-cat with white ears and blue eyes

Icepetal- White she-cat with blue eyes

Snowtail- Fluffy white she-cat with blue eyes

Applespots- Tortoiseshell she-cat with green eyes

Apprentice, Dovepaw

Redclaw- Dark ginger tom with amber eyes

Adderstrike- Silver tom with lighter tabby markings and dark blue eyes

Fawnheart- Light brown she-cat with lighter spots on her flank and pale green eyes

Apprentice, Sedgepaw

Lionclaw- Golden tom with amber eyes and abnormally large claws

Turtleblaze- Mottled brown tom with green eyes

Apprentice, Petalpaw

Yarrowtail- Fluffy, pale gray tom with pale green eyes

Apprentice, Larkpaw

Heatherflight- Light brown she-cat with green eyes

Flamepetal- Ginger she-cat with green eyes

Apprentice, Sorrelpaw

Brackenpelt- Dark ginger tom with amber eyes

Cloudspots- Fluffy gray and white tom with blue eyes

Rosewind - Ginger she-cat with a white tipped tail and green eyes

Cherryleaf- Tortoiseshell she-cat with green eyes

Apprentice, Falconpaw

Briarrose - Small brown she-cat with amber eyes

Earthpelt- Brown she-cat with white chest and paws with green eyes

Mudfall- Dark gray tom with green eyes

APPRENTICES *(more than six moons old, in training to become warriors)*

Honeypaw- Golden and white she-cat with blue eyes (Dawnstar and Lionclaw's daughter)

Falconpaw- Golden Brown tabby tom with amber eyes (Dawnstar

and Lionclaw's son)

Larkpaw- Dark brown she-cat with green eyes (Squirreltail and Brackenclaw's daughter)

Sorrelpaw- Tortishell she-cat with amber eyes (Squirreltail and Brackenclaw's daughter)

Dovepaw- Silver tabby she-cat with blue eyes (Icepool and Adderstrike's daughter)

Petalpaw- Silver she-cat with white tipped ears and blue eyes (Icepool and Adderstrike's daughter)

Sedgepaw- Fluffy gray she-cat with green eyes (Icepool and Adderstrike's daughter)

QUEENS *(she-cats expecting or nursing kits)*

Goldenleaf- Golden she-cat with green eyes, nursing Redclaw's kits (Hollypaw, ginger she-kit and Burnkit, ginger tom)

Squirreltail- Ginger she-cat with green eyes

ELDERS *(former warriors and queens, now retired)*

Sandfoot- Tortoiseshell she-cat with distinct ginger paws

Snakewhisker- Gray tom with green eyes and long whiskers

[image]

ASHCLAN

LEADER Riverstar- Blue gray she-cat with blue eyes

DEPUTY Ashblaze- Dark gray tom with amber eyes

MEDICINE CAT Skyfeather- Silver tabby tom with black markings and amber eyes

Apprentice, Blackpaw

WARRIORS

Harewhisker- Light brown tom

Petalshine- Silver and white tabby she-cat
Apprentice, Dustpaw

Foxfeather- Ginger tabby she-cat with green eyes
Apprentice, Leafpaw

Stormheart- Gray tom with dark green eyes
Apprentice, Rabbitpaw

Wheatwhisker- Light brown tom with small flecks
Apprentice, Nightpaw

Haresong- Light brown she-cat with green eyes

Lilyclaw- Gray tabby she-cat with green eyes

Ravensong- Black tabby she-cat with blue eyes
Apprentice, Timberpaw

APPRENTICES

Blackpaw - Black tom with blue eyes (Echoheart and Crowstep's son)

Nightpaw - Black she-cat with white paws and yellow eyes (Echoheart and Crowstep's daughter

Timberpaw - Pale brown tom with amber eyes. (Haresong and Grasstail's daughter)

Leafpaw- Mottled brown she-cat with green eyes (Haresong and Grasstail's daughter)

Dustpaw- Pale brown tom with amber eyes (Haresong and Grasstail's son)

Rabbitpaw- Pale brown and white she-cat with green eyes (Haresong and Grasstail's daughter)

QUEENS

Puddleclaw- Gray she-cat with green eyes, nursing Stormheart's kits (Hailkit, silver tabby she-cat and Sagekit, gray tabby she-cat)

Silvermoon- Silver tabby she-cat with blue, nursing Ashblaze's kits (Slatekit, dark gray tom, Dewkit, pale gray she-cat and Mistkit, gray she-cat with blue eyes)

ELDERS

Cloverstrike- Brown tabby she-cat with green eyes

Nightstorm- Dark gray tabby she-cat with green eyes

Crowstep- Gray tom with with black paws and amber eyes

Featherfall- Silver tabby tom

[image]

MOONCLAN

LEADER **Shadowstar**- Black tom with yellow eyes

DEPUTY **Violetfur**- Dark gray she-cat with bluish- purple eyes

MEDICINE CATS- **Ravenheart**- Black tom with a white flecked chest.

Oneflight- Silver tabby tom with blue eyes

WARRIORS

Ravenwing- Pretty dark gray she-cat with dark blue eyes

Dovestorm- Light gray she-cat with pale blue eyes

Pigeonpelt-Light gray tom with pale yellow eyes

Feathercloud- Fluffy white she-cat with blue eyes

Shadeflower-Black and gray she-cat with amber eyes

Swiftheart -Gray tom with green eyes

Tallsong - Dark gray she-cat with blue eyes
Apprentice, **Breezepaw**

Ebonywing- Black she-cat with white paws and yellow eyes

Brokenclaw - Dark gray tabby tom with amber eyes
Apprentice, **Fogpaw**

Icepool-White she-cat with dark blue eyes.
Apprentice, Rainpaw

Ashfeather- Black she-cat with blue eyes

APPRENTICES

Fogpaw- Silver tabby she-cat with blue eyes (Daughter of Ebonywing and Bonefur)

Breezepaw- Black and white tom with blue eyes (Son of Ebonywing and Bonefur)

Rainpaw - Black she-cat with blue eyes eyes (Daughter of Ebonywing and Bonefur)

QUEENS

Frostfire- White she-cat with pale gray flecks and green eyes, nursing Pigeonpelt's kits (Ferretkit, speckled brown and white tom, Mothkit, white and gray she-kit and Swankit, fluffy white she-kit)

Mosswind-Tortishell she-cat with green eyes, expecting Swiftheart's kits

ELDERS

Brambleflight-Dark brown tom with green eyes

Rainypelt- Pale, slender cream and brown she-cat with striking blue eyes

[image]

LICHENCLAN

LEADER **Jaggedstar**- Brown tabby tom with a crooked tail and amber eyes.

DEPUTY **Timbertail**- Brown tom with amber eyes

MEDICINE CAT **Roseheart**- Pale ginger she-cat with green eyes

WARRIORS

Twigheart-Small light brown she-cat with green eyes

Larkclaw- Brown tabby she-cat with a white tipped tail.

Mudpelt- Dark brown tom with yellow eyes.

Brackenheart-Red-brown tabby with a light brown chest

Rootscratch- Dark brown she-cat

Foxtail- Ginger tom with a white tail

Flamewhisker- Ginger she-cat

Seedclaw-Black and white tom with green eyes

Rowanwhisker-Dark red-brown she-cat with dark green eyes

Flowerheart- Pale brown she-cat with green eyes

Stumptail- Small brown tom with amber eyes

QUEENS

Heatherwind- White and black she- cat with blue eyes nursing

Timbertail's kits (Krestlekit, brown she-kit and Briarkit, pale brown she-kit)

Leafsong-Light brown tabby she-cat with amber eyes, nursing Foxtail's kits (Dapplekit, brown spotted tabby and Emberkit, ginger she-cat)

ELDERS

Maplepool- Brown and cream she-cat with amber eyes

Mousethorn - Long haired brown tom with green eyes

Owlheart-Brown tabby she-cat with green eyes

CATS OUTSIDE THE CLANS

Hornet- Golden tabby tom with amber eyes

Garnet- Dark ginger she-cat with green eyes

Primrose- Ginger she-cat with green eyes

Mite- Small gray tom with green eyes

Comet- Gray and white tom with blue eyes

Adder- Gray spotted tom with green eyes

Jade- Black she-cat with green eyes

Mist- Gray she-cat with blue eyes

Bane- Black tom with yellow eyes

Ivory- White she-cat with green eyes

Fish- Gray tabby tom with green eyes

Bramble- Brown tabby tom with green eyes

Marigold- Golden she-cat with green eyes

Aspen- Pale gray and white she-cat with blue eyes

Harvey- Elderly brown tom with yellow eyes

Juniper- Red-brown she-cat with green eyes

Harper- Ginger and white tabby she-cat with green eyes

Blue- Elderly blue gray tom with blind blue eyes

Hawk- Brown tabby tom

Flash- White tom with green eyes

Night- Gray tabby tom with icy blue eyes

[image]

Prologue

Honeywing felt blind, helpless and alone. StarClan was no longer the sunny, warm and prey-filled place that it used to be. It was dark and blinding. The forest was dying, and the Clans had yet to leave the forest after nearly two moons of being told that they should've. Honeywing could no longer reach the living cats, they were incapable of speaking with any cats in the Clans. The medicine cats had stopped going to the moonstone on the half-moon, Honeywing could only hope that they would be leaving soon.

The sound of pawsteps in the dead grass caught Honeywing's attention, she turned her head to the side trying to see who had caused the sound. She felt a chill as a slow breeze picked up, ruffling her golden fur. Through the shadows, Honeywing made out the silver tabby pelt of Moonwhisker, the former AshClan medicine cat.

"Moonwhisker." Honeywing called out to her friend and trotted up to you. "I haven't seen you around in a while."

"I've been busy," Moonwhisker replied, her voice strained and exhausted. "Eagleclaw and I have been trying so hard to reach out to our Clan, but there's something stopping us." She dropped her head. "I don't know what to do, they *have* to leave but they haven't yet. Leaf-bare is here and sickness and starvation are not far behind."

"I know, Moonwhisker." Honeywing let out a sigh, feeling her heart twist. Watching the forest she loved so much die, killing the cats along with it had been such a horrible thing to see. It pained her everyday, and knowing that she could no longer see the forest made it even worse. "We have to do something, we have to let them know that it's time to leave."

"We can we do? We can't talk to any cats down there." Moonwhisker asked. "We're completely cut off from them, I hate

feeling so useless." She lashed her tail.

Honeywing thought for a moment. "Maybe we can't speak to them, but perhaps we could send them a sign. The gathering is soon, on the night of the full moon we will send them a sign. A sign that it's time to leave."

"What kind of sign?" Moonwhisker tilted her head. "What could we send them."

"We had always planned to guide them to their new home and we still can if they leave the forest. We just have to send them a sign to let them know."

"We should talk to the others about this. I haven't seen Sagefeather around but I think I know where Barkclaw is. We should gather all the medicine cats and discuss this sign."

"I agree." Honeywing nodded. "You get Barkclaw and Eagleclaw, I'll try to find Poppyfur, Badgerstripe and Skyclaw." The two medicine cats split up, each vanishing into the darkness of StarClan.

It didn't take long for Honeywing to find Poppyfur, and she managed to find Skyclaw but not Bagderstripe. She decided she didn't have enough time to waste looking for him and headed back to their usual meeting place. It was normally a gentle waterfall, but the water had stopped completely, leaving only dry stone.

Honeywing approached the meeting area and saw Moonwhisker waiting with Barkclaw and Eagleclaw, with Eagleclaw looking annoyed as usual. "Thank you all for coming." Moonwhisker mewed, standing up as the other cats grew closer.

"What's this about?" Poppyfur demanded, looking at Honeywing with curious green eyes.

"We talked about it and we need to send the Clans a sign, we have to let them know that it's time to leave, *now*." Moonwhisker explained. "If they don't leave soon they're in serious danger of dying."

"How do we know we can even send them a sign?" Eagleclaw

growled. "Riverstar is so stubborn she probably wouldn't even listen to it."

"We can send it at the gathering, and we can use it to guide them home." Honeywing said quickly, she knew that Eagleclaw would take the most convincing. "They *have* to listen to it."

"Do we even know where we're sending them?" Barkclaw interjected.

"I know." Skyclaw spoke up, the old MoonClan medicine cat spoke up after keeping silence. "I also know what kind of sign to send them. The only dreams I've had lately are of a beautiful territory, surrounded and protected by mountains. I've seen this territory countless times and I've seen the path they must take."

"So what kind of sign do we send them?" Moonwhisker mewed, sounding hopeful for the first time in moons.

"We send them an owl, a bird known for their wisdom. An owl that can guide them to their new home."

Chapter 1

Honeypaw looked up at the pale blue sky, watching the snowflakes fall lazily from the wispy clouds above. She suppressed a shiver, ignoring the pain of hunger that clawed at her belly. She looked back down at the snow-covered ground. The tiny patch of marigold only had a few leaves left, the others killed by the cold. *As if it wasn't hard enough.* Honeypaw picked up the herbs and started back to camp. She didn't want to stay out any longer and risk sickness.

The SunClan camp was a miserable place, the fresh-kill pile was nearly empty and so were the bellies of the warriors that lived there. I had been nearly two moons since the Clans were instructed to leave and for some reason: they hadn't yet. Honeypaw knew that her mother, Dawnstar, had been impatient and anxious to leave but the other Clans had been hesitating, namely AshClan.

Honeypaw stepped into the medicine cat den, Pebblestep had returned from her own herb collecting task and from the looks of it, had only recovered small traces of yarrow. The other cat in the medicine cat den was Flash, a rogue who had served under the former AshClan warrior Echoheart until his sister, Lilac died and Echoheart nearly killed him as well. Pebblestep and Honeypaw had taken it upon themselves to heal him back to full health.

Flash's wound was completely healed, but he remaind in SunClan camp for fear of returning to the twolegplace and facing the wrath of Echoheart. Flash lived in the medicine cat den, but would hunt for the Clan as well. Honeypaw had grown quite used to having Flash around, he had a stoic and sharp personality, he wasn't a cat she could talk to like Snakewhisker, but he was good company.

"What did you find out there?" Pebblestep questioned once Honeypaw entered the den, turning to face her apprentice. Her one good blue eye rested on the small scraps of marigold that Honeypaw picked. "Is that it?"

Honeypaw set down her sad collection of herbs and nodded sadly.

"Yeah, everything that wasn't killed with the forest is now being killed by the frost." She carried the marigold over to their tiny herb store. "I've said this before, but why haven't we left yet? Have you spoken with my mother about it?"

"I have and she doesn't know why either. It's been almost *two moons.* We should've left long ago. I know it's hard just to get up and leave but we're risking our lives. We have no herbs, no prey and sickness could pick up at any point. Hollykit and Burnkit are four moons old now, but they're still kits. At least Sandfoot and Snakewhisker aren't incredibly old, they could fight sickness but we have no catmint."

"So what are we going to do?" Honeypaw asked, feeling a sense of helplessness weigh down on her chest. *I can't do anything for my Clan. We've stopped going to the moonstone because we can't even speak with StarClan.* Her chest tightened. *A medicine cat's job is to heal their Clanmates and communicate with StarClan, if we can't do either of those then are we really medicine cats?*

"The gathering is two days from now, we'll have to make it clear to the Clans that it's time to go." Pebblestep sighed. "I'm going out to look for more herbs. You can stay here, I'll be back soon." Without waiting for a response, Pebblestep quickly headed out of the medicine cat den, leaving Flash and Honeypaw alone.

"Things are really bad around here, aren't they?" Flash questioned, lifting his head from his nest.

Honeypaw nodded. "SunClan is struggling to survive, and we still have much more of leaf-bare to deal with." She looked at her paws. "And Pebblestep and I can't do anything to help them."

"I'm sure at this gathering you'll be able to convince the other leaders to leave, I doubt that SunClan are the only ones struggling right now." Honeypaw knew that Flash had a point, and she was certain that the other medicine cats were urging their leaders to leave. As she thought about the other medicine cats, her mind drifted to the AshClan medicine cat apprentice Blackpaw.

They had met in secret three times since their first, but hadn't done

much lately because it was too cold and they had other things to do. Honeypaw missed spending time with him, she only ever got to see him at gatherings now since they stopped going to the moonstone at the half-moon. *I shouldn't be thinking about him in this way.* Honeypaw told herself over and over, but no matter what she said; she couldn't stop the feelings she felt.

Honeypaw had done everything she can to just focus on being a medicine cat, but she didn't have much to do without any herbs. She felt useless, scared and alone. She never really spoke to her brother, Falconpaw either. He was busy trying to hunt and provide for the Clan. Even border patrols had come to a slow down so every cat could focus on hunting. Even with all that, the fresh-kill pile remained bare.

So far there had been no signs of sickness, but both Honeypaw and Pebblestep knew that it wasn't far behind. The only herb they had to treat greencough was chickweed, which wasn't as useful a catmint, and they had a very tiny amount. If multiple cats in the Clan got sick, without any herbs Honeypaw knew that she would lose Clanmates.

In an attempt to keep herself busy, Honeypaw went to the elders den, seeing if Sandfoot or Snakewhisker needed anything. They both claimed to be fine and Honeypaw left with disappointment weighing on her shoulders. Neither Goldenleaf nor her kits needed anything, so Honeypaw trudged around camp begging for something to do.

Movement caught her eye as she passed the warrior's den and spotted a hunting patrol returning. The patrol consisted of Crowfur, Turtleblaze, Petalpaw, Heatherflight and Mudfall. Crowfur and Heatherflight each carried in scrawny squirrels while the rest of the patrol had nothing but disappointment in their eyes.

Crowfur and Heatherflight set their fresh-kill down and the patrol separated. Honeypaw caught Petalpaw's eyes and approached the apprentice. "Hunting not go well?" Honeypaw questioned, knowing the answer but trying to make conversation.

Petalpaw noded. "Turtleblaze almost caught a mouse but it got

away, other than that we saw nothing else." The apprentice sighed sadly. "I feel like I'm not doing enough, I can't hunt and we can't find any prey."

"I know how you feel." Honeypaw flattened her ears. "Pebblestep and I haven't had any luck with herbs either and we're constantly looking."

"I thought we were supposed to find a new home." Petalpaw pointed out. "Like, two moons ago."

"We were, but something is holding the other Clans back. We're going to try and convince the leaders to leave at the gathering in two days. If we can't then I don't know what we're going to do."

"At least SunClan is lucky to have two great medicine cats." Petalpaw purred, clearly trying to make light of the situation. Honeypaw honestly felt a little assured by the apprentice's words. Petalpaw was an incredibly kind cat and Honeypaw always enjoyed talking to her. "No matter what happens I'm sure we'll be fine. SunClan is strong."

Honeypaw looked at Petalpaw gratefully, she was right. SunClan was strong, and despite all odds Honeypaw felt deep down in her heart that SunClan *would* survive. *Not just SunClan either, all four Clans will make it out of this. I swear it on my life.*

Chapter 2

"Great catch!" Falconpaw praised Sedgepaw as she managed to catch a decently sized squirrel. "That's the biggest prey I've seen in a moon." Sedgepaw's ears went back a little and she looked at her paws bashfully.

"Thanks, Falconpaw." She mewed softly, setting down her squirrel. The only other prey that had caught was a small mouse that Falconpaw had caught himself. He didn't know where Cherryleaf, Fawnheart or Cloudspots had gone, but he hoped that they had caught more prey.

It had been over a moon since Falconpaw's last session with Falconclaw and he had used the time to dedicate himself to becoming the best hunter he could be to provide for his Clan. He thought they would be gone by now, but the Clans remaind in their dying home.

In the meantime, Falconpaw had become close friends with Sedgepaw. She was a skilled, brave and talented apprentice. She was bold and challenged herself. Falconpaw knew that Falconclaw didn't like Sedgepaw or her sisters, but Falconpaw couldn't see why. *Sedgepaw is far from a kittypet, she's a SunClan cat through and through!*

"I guess we should try and find our mentors." Falconpaw suggested, sniffing the air and trying to pick out the other cats scent through the burning scent of frost. He quickly discovered that he hated the snow. It got clumped in his fur, made hunting hard and it was always cold.

"Cherryleaf said she was going near the MoonClan border, right?" Sedgepaw reminded him.

"Yeah." Falconpaw nodded and they headed towards the MoonClan border, the snow and freezing breeze nipping at their ear tips. Falconpaw ducked his head, reminding himself once more how

much he hated this season.

As they neared the border, Falconpaw heard the voices of Cherryleaf and Cloudspots. They grew closer until the two cats appeared from the leafless trees. Falconpaw noticed how close the two of them were walking. Their pelts brushed and they talked with their heads close. Falconpaw eyed them suspiciously. *I guess there's nothing wrong with them being mates, but now is far from a good time to have kits.* He twitched his tail.

"Hi you two." Cherryleaf mewed once she spotted Falconpaw and Sedgepaw. "Did you catch anything."

"Sedgepaw caught a decently sized squirrel." Falconpaw explained. "And I caught a mouse, what about you?"

"I caught a squirrel as well." Cloudspots responded, looking around. "It's buried over by that tree." He motioned to a thin, dead-looking tree. He padded over to it and dug up the squirrel, it was smaller than Sedgepaw's, but looked big enough.

As they moved through the forest the scent of prey filled Falconpaw's nose, he could tell that his Clanmates could scent it as well. Sedgepaw was the first to drop to a crouch, and without speaking began tracking it down. The others stood by as Sedgepaw tracked down the fresh-kill.

Against the white snow, Falconpaw could make out the red fur of a squirrel. Sedgepaw had seen it too and the she-cat was stalking it with ease. The others waited, hoping for an easy kill while she sought out her prey.

Falconpaw's ears twitched as he heard a splintering sound, the sound was all too familiar. His mind traveled back to Pikepaw, an apprentice who was killed by a falling branch. On alert now, Falconpaw searched for the tree that was about to break. He continued hearing the sound until he followed it to a tree towering over Sedgepaw. His heart jumped as he noticed that the entire tree was starting to give way.

"Sedgepaw!" Falconpaw cried out to his denmate, she whipped her

head around and the squirrel ran away. There was a look of annoyance on Sedgepaw's face, and she clearly hadn't noticed the falling tree.

There was a loud snap as the tree's roots broke away and the tree began falling. Gathering up all of his energy and strength, Falconpaw ran to Sedgepaw. He made it to her in three bounds and jumped on her, biting into her scruff and throwing the two of them out of the path of the tree.

Falconpaw and Sedgepaw hit the ground the same time the tree did, tossing up a large flurry of snow. Falconpaw felt a rock digging into his ribs, but he ignored the pain. "Are you two okay?" He heard Cherryleaf call from the other side of the fallen tree.

"Yeah!" Falconpaw called back, standing up and making sure Sedgepaw was okay. Her thick fur was clumped with snow but other than she looked okay. The apprentice sat up and looked at Falconpaw in shock.

"You saved me." She said in awe, her green eyes wide and her mouth agape.

Falconpaw's pelt burned slightly. "I did what any Clanmate would." He brushed some snow off of her pelt with his tail. "We look out for each other."

Cherryleaf and Cloudspots jumped over the tree and headed over to inspect the two apprentices. "Falconpaw that was incredible." Cloudspots mewed with wonder. "I didn't even hear that tree falling until it was too late."

"It was truly amazing." Cherryleaf purred, her eyes filled with pride. Falconpaw felt a sensation of joy and relief washing over him. He turned and helped Sedgepaw to her paws, she looked at him gratefully.

"Is everything okay?" All cats turned their head as they heard Fawnheart's voice in the distant. The pale brown she-cat ran up, her pale eyes going wide at the sight of the fallen tree. "What happened?"

"A tree was almost fell on me but Falconpaw pushed me out of the way." Sedgepaw explained eagerly, Falconpaw's pelt continued to burn. *Why is* this *the thing that makes me feel this way?*

"Are you alright?" Fawnheart looked over Sedgepaw's fur, searching for injuries. Falconpaw always knew Fawnheart to be a sharp and ill-tempered she-cat but there was genuine concern in her eyes.

"Yes, I'm fine." Sedgepaw assured her mentor. "Just a little bit upset about the lost prey, but I guess me being alive is better than one skinny squirrel."

"You've got that right." Cloudspots touched his tail to Sedgepaw's shoulder. "We should head back to camp, gather all of the prey that you've caught.

In the end, they managed to bring back a decent amount of prey. It wouldn't last long but it was enough for today. As they stepped back into camp, Falconpaw spotted Honeypaw talking to Petalpaw.

"I'm going to tell Petalpaw what happened." Sedgepaw mewed, but turned to Falconpaw before she left. "Thank you again for saving my life, I'll have to make it up to sometime."

Falconpaw shuffled his paws, feeling a little awkward. "Don't worry about it, you're my Clanmate. I did what I needed to do." *I didn't want to watch another one of my Clanmates be crushed by a tree.* Sedgepaw let out a soft purr and padded over to Petalpaw and Honeypaw.

Falconpaw turned to where Sorrelpaw was talking with Flamepetal, they looked like they were preparing to leave. After the death of Pikepaw, it took nearly a moon for the two sisters to get back on duties after watching their brother die. Both Flamepetal and Yarrowtail had been working hard to help their apprentices catch up on lost training.

Falconpaw was glad that he didn't have to see that again, the death of Pikepaw had dug into his skin like a tick. He never wanted to watch a Clanmate die like that again, which is why he was so driven to save Sedgepaw. With a sigh, Falconpaw started heading

for the apprentice den feeling exhausted all of the sudden.

I was able to push Sedgepaw out of the way but trees will keep falling. Prey will get lower and herbs won't grow back. I can't defend the entire Clan from that. Falconpaw dug his claws into the snow. *But I will certainly try.*

Chapter 3

"Just focus on keeping your balance." Nightpaw instructed. "Distribute your weight evenly on all four paws, but when you jump you wanna use the strength in your hind legs." Nightpaw watched Rabbitpaw, the small apprentice did as Nightpaw said and prepared to jump. She waggled her hindquarters and jumped. It wasn't the best jump, but she landed cleanly on her paws. "Good job!" Nightpaw praised and rushed up to her friend. "You're getting a lot better."

"Really?" Rabbitpaw's green eyes filled with hope.

"Yep." Nightpaw purred. "You really are." In the past moon, Nightpaw had started working with Rabbitpaw. While they weren't being trained by their own mentors, Nightpaw and Rabbitpaw would go out and train together. The apprentice was incredibly shy, insecure and neurotic and Nightpaw wanted to help her be braver and more confident.

During their time training, Nightpaw and Rabbitpaw had become incredibly close friends and Nightpaw was happy for that. For the longest time, Nightpaw's only friends had been Blackpaw and Wheatwhisker but Blackpaw had so much to deal with lately and Wheatwhisker was her mentor and a warrior so it was nice to have a friend who she could spend time with and who was her age. She also didn't consider Thornstar her friend, just another cat who taught her skills. She also hadn't been visited by him in a long time, she had to admit while she didn't miss Thornstar, she missed the training. Training with Rabbitpaw had helped make up for that.

"We should head back to camp and see if we're needed for any patrols." Nightpaw suggested. Rabbitpaw agreed with a nod and the two apprentices hurried back to camp. Nightpaw shivered as they moved through the frozen forest. Normally, the pine trees in AshClan territory would keep their needles all season, but the trees were nearly bare thanks to the dying forest.

Not only were the trees losing their needles, but they were falling as well. Several trees had fallen in the past two moons, one which had nearly crushed Ravensong and Timberpaw who nearly escaped with their tails. Riverstar had made it a rule to stay away from trees that looked like the would fall soon.

She had also organize patrols of cats to try and push over trees that were on the verge of falling to avoid any cat getting caught by the trees and getting possibly killed. Nightpaw knew that the SunClan apprentice Pikepaw had been killed by a falling branch and she didn't want that to happen to any of her own Clanmates.

Nightpaw and Rabbitpaw reached camp and found a scene when they returned. Skyfeather and Riverstar faced each other before the leader's den, both their fur bristling. Blackpaw was off to the side, his ears flattened and looking incredibly uncomfortable.

"I told you it's not that easy, Skyfeather!" Riverstar spat at the medicine cat. "We can't just get up and leave!"

"We've had two moons and we're no closer to leaving!" Skyfeather argued, lashing his tail. "I can't stand by and watch my Clanmates starve any longer! We need to leave, the longer we wait the more we are putting our Clanmates lives at risk. Any deaths are on your paws, Riverstar!" Riverstar flattened her ears and gasps of shock spread throughout the Clan.

"How dare you speak to me like that?" Riverstar puffed out her chest and towered over Skyfeather, but the pale medicine cat stood his ground, blue eyes blazing with anger. "I'm your leader, Skyfeather!"

"And I'm your medicine cat! It's my job to look over and protect my Clanmates but I can't do that when my leader is an idiot!" Nightpaw's jaw dropped.

"Don't forget, Skyfeather, my word is law!" Riverstar's claws dug into the frozen ground.

"So was Thornstar's! But we stood up to him because AshClan was in danger! You're trying to prove we're strong by staying

independent but the truth is that we *need* the other Clans right now! AshClan is strong spirited but we have no herbs, no prey and less warriors than any other Clan. *We need help,* Riverstar!" Skyfeather's voice was desperate and pained, Nightpaw could see the strain on his face. "Talk to the leaders at the gathering tomorrow, make the decision to start leaving before the half-moon. If we haven't left by then then I'm gathering up the Clan and we will leave without you. I'm not going to let my Clan die." Skyfeather turned away and started back towards the medicine cat den.

The Clan, including Riverstar was in a stunned silence. Nightpaw looked at Rabbitpaw who looked just as shocked about the whole situation. Nightpaw's attention went back to Riverstar as Ashblaze approached her. "You know he's right." Ashblaze said quietly. "We should've left long ago."

"I know." Riverstar's voice was dry. "We will talk to the leaders tomorrow night." Ashblaze dipped his head and headed towards the nursery. Nightpaw watched him walk there, thinking about his three kits. Slatekit, Dewkit and Mistkit had all been born to Silvermoon about half a moon ago. They were all born healthy, but the Clan feared what could happen to them without herbs and prey. Sagekit and Hailkit were two moons old now and strong, but they were still young and might not be able to fight off sickness. Nightpaw had been worried about leaving, but she knew that it would be the best thing for the Clan.

Nightpaw opened her eyes, but she wasn't in the apprentice or the dark forest where she trained with Thornstar. She was alone in a vast field with snow half-way up her forelegs. The wind blew mercilessly, it felt like claws cutting into Nightpaw's fur. She flattened her ears and squinted, trying to figure out where she was.

As the violent, leaf-bare wind blew, Nightpaw was sure that she could hear voices being carried by the wind. She strained her ears to hear what they were saying. Her heart quickened as she realized the voices were scared. *They're in trouble!* Nightpaw pushed through the heavy wind and snow, using all of her senses to try and figure out where they were coming from. As she trudged through the snow, feeling her muscles scream for her stop, Nightpaw began to recognize the voices of her Clanmates.

With her heart rate quickening, Nightpaw forced herself to move faster. *I have to get to my Clanmates!* She thought frantically, panic beginning to set in and slow down her paws. Not willing to give up, Nightpaw forced herself to run, bounding through the thick snow and biting wind.

In the distance she could now see shapes and the sounds of fear and terror were loud and clear. Nightpaw saw Silvermoon cowering over three small shapes, Nightpaw's heart twisted as she realized that it was her three kits, all dead. *No!* Nightpaw ran harder, doing everything she could to reach her Clanmates.

She started seeing more cats, Petalshine and Lilyclaw were nearly buried by the snow, their eyes glazed over. Harewhisker was on the ground, a horrible wound in his belly that stained the snow crimson. *What did that?* It was a horrible sight and Nightpaw had to force herself to keep moving.

She spotted more and more of her Clanmates, frozen or bloodied from a mysterious attacker. Nightpaw felt helpless. *What do I do? All my Clanmates are dying!* An ear piercing scream turned Nightpaw's blood to ice, she whipped her head around trying to find the source. She spotted Rabbitpaw, cowering before a disgusting looking creature. It looked like a fox, but bigger. It's brown fur was dirty, matted and bloody. The creature towered over Rabbitpaw while the apprentice helplessly wailed for help.

"I'm coming Rabbitpaw!" Nightpaw yelled, her stomach twisted. Nightpaw ran as hard as she possibly could, her legs aching and her lungs burning. The creature moved forward, snapping its jaws at Rabbitpaw's tiny body. "No!" Nightpaw cried out, making one final jump to reach her friend. Nightpaw saw the creature's teeth close around Rabbitpaw's neck, fear and pain filled Rabbitpaw's green eyes. Nightpaw met her gaze and felt her heart breaking.

I was too late. Nightpaw hit the ground and shot up, suddenly she was back in the apprentice den. Her heart was pounding so loud she was sure it woke up the other apprentices. Nightpaw looked around frantically, her eyes resting on Rabbitpaw immediately. The brown and white she-cat was sleeping soundly in her nest, free from harm.

A dream. Nightpaw told herself, struggling to relax. *It was just a dream.* Her blood was still racing and her legs were sore. She couldn't shake the image of her dead Clanmates out of her mind. She rested her paws on her chin, trying to calm down. *I can't let that happen.* Nightpaw told herself. *I never want to see that again.*

Chapter 4

"I don't want to eat those!" Sagekit spat, lashing her tiny tail. "They taste gross." The tiny gray tabby she-cat sat down and stuck her nose in the air. Blackpaw fought back the urge to groan.

"You need to, dear." Puddleclaw nuzzled her daughter. "It will help you." Sagekit looked at her sister, Hailkit who didn't look happy about having to eat herbs. "They will keep your strength up."

"Why don't Mistkit, Dewkit and Slatekit have to take them?" Sagekit demanded, glaring at Blackpaw.

"Silvermoon took them and they will get to her kits by her milk. You want to stay strong don't you? Or do you want someone taking care of you at all times?" Blackpaw questioned, Sagekit dropped her ears. "If you take these herbs then I'll leave you alone."

Sagekit snorted and took a bite of the ragwort that Blackpaw had provided. Following her sister, Hailkit did the same. Both kits made a disgusted face as they swallowed the herb and had to stop themselves from spitting it out. "Thank you." Blackpaw sighed with relief, that had taken much longer than he had wanted. "I'll have one of the apprentices send a mouse your way."

"Cool! Thanks, Blackpaw!" Sagepaw bounded around her sister, the herb situation already forgotten. *At least kits don't hold grudges.*

"Thank you, Blackpaw." Silvermoon purred from her nest.

"No problem." Blackpaw dipped his head at the queen. "Let me or Skyfeather know if you need anything." Blackpaw gathered up the last remnants of the ragwort leaves and carried it back to the medicine at den.

In the past two moons it had become a mess of moss and herbs, their nests were unkempt and Skyfeather constantly looked like he had been fighting with a bramble thicket. The medicine cats fur wa

ungroomed and his eyes dull with stress.

"Did the kits take the herbs?" Skyfeather asked without turning around, his voice strained.

"Yeah they did, Sagekit argued a bit but eventually ate them. We have a tiny bit of the ragwort left." Blackpaw explained, setting down the scraps of leaves he had after the kits.

"Put it with the other strength herbs. If tonight goes as planned then we'll be leaving soon. I want to have everything sorted for when the medicine cats combine what they have."

Blackpaw nodded and set down the ragwort with the small amount of juniper and burnett they had. He glanced at Skyfeather, feeling a moment of anxiety for his mentor. Blackpaw feared that fro all of his stress Skyfeather would cause himself to get sick. Blackpaw was stressed too, but Skyfeather would often go without sleep. He endlessly counted their herbs as if he were afraid the would just vanish.

I wish I could help him. Blackpaw wished, but there was nothing he could. The only thing that could help Skyfeather was more herbs, he wouldn't be happy until they found their new territory. Even then, none of them had any idea of how long it would take to find that territory. If they got their early then there wouldn't be many herbs due to the snow. *I just hope we find a good home.*

"It's almost time." Skyfeather stood up straight. "We need to prepare to leave for the gathering." He flicked his tail and started barely straightening up the den. When he finished there was still moss and twigs scattered across the floor.

Skyfeather at least took a few moments to smooth down his unkempt fur. "Let's go." Skyfeather left the medicine cat without waiting for Blackpaw who jumped to his paws and followed his mentor to the leader's den where the Clan was starting to gather. Skyfeather and Riverstar shared an uncomfortable gaze. Ever since their fight in front of the Clan, Skyfeather and Riverstar hadn't said a word to each other.

The medicine cats shouldn't be fighting with the leader. It's just wrong. Blackpaw looked over towards the group of apprentices who were coming. It was Nightpaw, Rabbitpaw and Timberpaw. For the past few days, Nightpaw had a haunted look on her face, Blackpaw wish he knew what was causing it. *I haven't spent any time talking to my sister.* Blackpaw thought with guilt. *I hope that changes too.*

"Are we ready?" Riverstar called out, looking over the cats who had gathered which was almost every warrior. Stormheart and Harewhisker were staying back as well as Dustpaw and Leafpaw. *AshClan is so small.* Blackpaw thought, looking towards the nursery for a moment. *I'm glad we have five kits in the nursery. Let's just hope they survive.* Blackpaw instantly scolded himself for the morbid thought. *They have to survive.*

Riverstar led her Clan out of camp and towards the gathering hollow. Blackpaw shivered as they stepped into the cold night. He walked beside Skyfeather just behind Riverstar and Ashblaze. Skyfeather's blue eyes were distant as usual, focused on something that wasn't there. Blackpaw looked up towards the sky, he could see the stars but something felt empty. Not being able to speak with StarClan had left him feeling blind and alone.

He closed his eyes for just a moment and in his mind flashed the bright green eyes of Honeypaw. He opened his eyes again, his heart beat suddenly quickening. They had only met a few more times after the first, and Blackpaw knew it was wrong but for the first time in a long time, he didn't feel so alone when he was with her. *We're just friends.* Blackpaw reminded himself.

AshClan reached the gathering hollow just after SunClan and were the last ones to arrive. Dawnstar, Jaggedstar and Shadowstar had already started talking with their deputies and medicine cats while the other warriors and apprentices started to mingle. Blackpaw spotted Honeypaw immediately, she was standing beside Dawnstar and looking at the others with concern deep in her green eyes.

Shadowstar was the first cat to spot that AshClan had arrived and he greeted them with a nod. While the AshClan warriors went to the other Clans, Blackpaw stayed with his mentor as he, Ashblaze and Riverstar made their way to the other leaders.

"Greetings." Dawnstar mewed, dipping her head. Riverstar dipped her head in response and looked at the others. Blackpaw noticed that Jaggedstar looked incredibly sorrowful about something. His amber eyes were cast downward. The LichenClan deputy, Timbertail, looked similar. *Did something happen in AshClan?* Blackpaw knew that before the last gathering, LichenClan's former deputy Mossleaf had died from eating sick prey. *Did something else happen in LichenClan?*

"I assume you all know what we need to talk about tonight?" Dawnstar questioned the leaders. "We can't avoid it any longer."

"I say we share our news as usual," Shadowstar suggested. "Then discuss our plans with each other."

The other leaders agreed and the gathering began. Blackpaw sat beside Skyfeather at the base of the hollow wall. His eyes drifted to Honeypaw who was sitting beside her own mentor, staring at her paws. *We haven't spoken yet. I hope I can talk to her a little.*

"Greetings cats of all Clans." Shadowstar began. "I will start this gathering off, if that's okay." After the other leaders nodded Shadowstar stood up. "MoonClan doesn't have much to report other than that Mosswind has moved into the nursery." There was cheers, but a sense of fear behind it as well. *They're all worried the kits will die.* Blackpaw thought.

The next to go was Dawnstar, the SunClan leader stood up and faced the Clans. "SunClan doesn't have much to report, we're struggling as the rest but we're surviving." Dawnstar sat down and Riverstar was next.

"Earlier this moon, Silvermoon gave birth to three healthy kits." There were more uncertain cheers. "We also welcome Crowstep, Featherfall, Nightstorm and Cloverstrike into the elder's den." Blackpaw looked at his father who had decided to retire alongside his sister early in the moon. *I don't know why he would do that. We need as many warriors as possible.* Blackpaw had been a little bitter about the whole thing.

Finally, Jaggedstar stood up. "LichenClan is proud to welcome two

new warriors, Stumptail and Flowerheart." Blackpaw spotted the two warriors, holding their heads proudly. "We're also happy to announce the birth of two new kits to Leafsong and Foxtail. Finally, Maplepool and Mousethorn have joined the elder's den." Blackpaw narrowed his eyes. *That was all good news, why does Jaggedstar look so sad?*

"Now that we've shared our news," Dawnstar mewed, speaking once Jaggedstar had sat down. "We need to discuss finding a new territory." Skyfeather immediately stood up once Dawnstar stopped talking.

"We've waited long enough, it's time for the Clans to leave." The AshClan medicine cat said boldly, Blackpaw could see the cats of the Clans sharing scared and uncertain gazes.

"Skyfeather is right," Shadowstar mewed. "We're risking our own lives by staying any longer. We need to band together and find a new place to live. There's many kits in the Clans, and I want them survive."

"When should we leave?" Pigeonpelt of MoonClan asked from the crowd. "Where do we even go?"

Dawnstar opened her mouth to speak but a loud cry split the air, sending chills down Blackpaw's spine. All eyes went to the trees overhead. In the branches was an owl. It was huge and as white as the moon, it almost didn't look real. The owl let out another cry and took off, it's white feathers glowing under the moonlight. The cats followed it as it flew over the gathering hollow, towards the Spirit Woods and LichenClan territory.

"That was our sign." Ravenheart breathed out, his green eyes wide with awe. "StarClan can still see us, and they're telling us which way to go."

"I also suppose that's StarClan's sign telling us that it's time." Riverstar sighed, taking a deep, shaky breath. "We just have to decide on a time."

"Before we do that," Jaggedstar suddenly spoke up after keeping his

silence. "There is something I need to say." Blackpaw noticed both Timbertail and Roseheart dropping their heads, LichenClan collectively flattened their ears, sadness filling their eyes. *What's going on?*

"I'm part of the reason we haven't left yet," Jaggedstar began. "I've had to make a very difficult decision. However, I've finally come to a choice and my Clan has accepted it."

"You're not staying are you?" Shadowstar questioned, sharing a worried glance with Dawnstar.

"LichenClan will be leaving the forest, but I will not." Blackpaw and the other medicine cats stared in shock at the leader, he hung his head low.

"What in the name of StarClan are you talking about?" Riverstar demanded. "You're leaving your Clan behind? Why?"

Jaggedstar sighed. "I'm on my last life and I can already feel sickness creeping in on me. It won't be long before I am incredibly and I will be unable to travel. I would only slow you all down. It's time to LichenClan to have a new leader." He moved his eyes to Timbertail. "And I know Timbertail will lead them well."

"Jaggedstar you can't be serious." Dawnstar's voice shook. "We would give everything to save you, you know that."

"And that's exactly the point." Jaggedstar mewed, a bit sharply. "You need to focus on getting to your new home. I won't be long behind you, I will be there to guide you all and to get Timbertail's his nine lives when the time comes." His claws dug into the branch. "This is the hardest decision I've ever had to make, and I've dedicated my life to serving and guiding LichenClan. I'm sure some of you remember Elmstar." Shadowstar and Riverstar, as well as a few others warriors in the Clans dropped their eyes. "I did everything I could to rebuild LichenClan after him, and I've liked to think I've done good by my Clan." He closed his eyes. "It's my time, I can already feel StarClan close by."

"I wish it didn't have to be this way." Dawnstar said sadly.

"Me too." Despite everything, Blackpaw saw hope shimmering in Jaggedstar's eyes. "But I know that all four Clans will survive. I'll be there to see it in StarClan once you get there." He looked up at the stars. "And to be proud of my Clanmates."

There was a long silence in the hollow. "Two sunrises from now." Shadowstar said, breaking the silent. "Two sunrises from now we will meet here one last time, and we will leave. We will find our new home."

Chapter 5

"Is that everything?" Pebblestep questioned, looking over all the herbs that she and Honeypaw had carefully wrapped in leaves and moss.

"I think so." Honeypaw replied, quickly looking over everything they had gathered. "The only herbs left in the store and just small scraps. She looked up at her mentor, the only thing that remaind in the den was their nests. "Where's Flash, anyway?" Honeypaw questioned, realizing the absence of the rogue.

"I believe he's out in the last hunting party." Pebblestep explained, putting their herb bundles in a neat pile. "I wonder what his plans are, he seems to be quite friendly with the rest of the Clan, I wonder if he'll join us."

"Would my mother let him?"

"I'm sure she would, Flash has proven to be a skilled hunter and we saw him during Echoheart's attack. If Dawnstar sees his loyalty I don't see why she wouldn't let him." Pebblestep mewed. "He's a noble cat, and our Clanmates seem to trust him."

Flash had been just one of the many things that Honeypaw had been wondering about the past few days. Today was the day the Clans would leave, and it felt incredibly surreal to Honeypaw. She had wondered if Flash would leave, stay and what would happen to the Clans out there. They didn't know what to expect. Honeypaw also didn't know what to think about Jaggedstar staying behind, she knew he had made his decision but leaving a cat behind didn't feel quite right.

"We should go tell Dawnstar that everything is ready." Pebblestep mewed. "It's nearly time to leave." Honeypaw nodded, feeling fear wrap around her heart like a snake, she swallowed the terror and followed Pebblestep to the SunTree.

Dawnstar was inside with Cinderflame, Turtleblaze and Lionclaw. They were discussing the journey, and what to do about it. Their conversation stopped when Pebblestep and Honeypaw stepped inside. "All the herbs have been gathered, we're ready to leave."

"The hunting patrol should return any moment as well." Cinderflame added.

"Will you go greet them? And when they get back bring Flash to me, please." Dawnstar requested. Cinderflame just nodded and left the den, waiting for the patrol.

"What are you going to do about him?" Turtleblaze questioned.

"Well, if he wants to stay I'm going to make him a warrior." Dawnstar replied, Turtleblaze and Lionclaw shared an uncertain glance.

"Are you sure that's a good idea?" Turtleblaze inquired. "He's been a rogue his entire life."

"He's been with us for two moons now, and for about a moon now he could've left. He could've found his own new home with prey but instead he stayed here with SunClan. He's never taken more than his fair share of prey and has even given up prey so that Hollykit and Burnkit could eat. He may be a rogue but I think that Flash is a Clan cat at heart. He'll be a very valuable warrior to our Clan if he chooses to join us."

"I agree with you." Lionclaw interjected. "He was uncertain at first, but Flash fits right in with the other cats. He's even made several friends. If he agrees to go on this journey then he's risking his life with the rest of us."

"Very well." Turtleblaze dipped his head. "I respect and trust your judgement, Dawnstar. You're my sister and leader and I put my faith in you."

"Thank you, Turtleblaze." Dawnstar purred.

"You wanted to see me?" All heads turned to see Flash standing in the entrance of the SunTree, he looked around nervously. Fear deep

in his green eyes.

"Yes," Dawnstar stood up, going to face Flash. The rogue stood his ground in front of the leader, but Honeypaw could tell that he was scarred. "Today is the day the Clans are leaving and I need to know what you're doing. Are you coming with us? Or staying in the forest?"

Flash looked at his paws, looking around bashfully. "Well--" He stammered. "I don't know if you'd let me, but I was wondering if I could come with you." He said the words quickly, clearly terrified of the answer. *He really does want to join us.* Honeypaw felt a small rush of joy, she liked Flash. Having him in the Clan would be good, he would be a valuable warrior just as Dawnstar said.

Dawnstar looked down at Flash with gentle, glowing eyes. "I was hoping that's what you'd say. You've made friends in SunClan and we'd be glad to have you with us." Flash looked up, joy and surprise shimmering in his eyes. He clearly hadn't been expecting that response. "But you'll have to be given a warrior name."

Flash's eyes went wide. "I'll be getting a warrior name?"

"Is that okay?"

Flash nodded. "If that's what it takes, I'll do it." He bowed his head. "Thank you, Dawnstar."
"It's my pleasure." Dawnstar purred. "Let's go hold your ceremony then we can leave." All of the cats left the SunTree and gathered around the SunTree while Dawnstar climbed up it, looking out, over the Clan. "Let all cats old enough to catch their own prey gather beneath the SunTree for a Clan meeting!"

SunClan had already kind of gathered, they were getting ready to leave so they were all already in camp. Honeypaw watched the Clan gathered, guessing that they figured it was about leaving. *I hope they all welcome Flash into the Clan.* She knew that he had made friends with Redclaw, Brackenpelt, Heatherflight and Cloudspots. Most of the Clan had become accustomed to him as well.

"Today is the day that the Clans are leaving the forest." Dawnstar

began. "I know many of you are scared, but I promise to guide you and support all of you through this long journey. SunClan will survive!" Cheers of joy and pride rang out through SunClan camp. "Before we go however," Dawnstar continued as the cheering died down. "Many of you have gotten to know Flash, he has hunted for us, struggled with us and befriended us. He may be a rogue, but I feel that Flash truly belongs in SunClan." Honeypaw was honestly surprised that no cats were shocked by this news, they all nodded in agreement. "He has agreed to join SunClan and it's my pleasure to give him his warrior name." Dawnstar jumped down, facing Flash, the white tom looked both overjoyed and terrified. "StarClan, I call upon you to look down on this rogue, he may not have been born a Clan cat but he the spirit of one and I commend him to you as a warrior in his turn." Flash trembled slightly. "Flash, do you promise to uphold the warrior code and defend the Clan even at the cost of your life."

"I do." Despite his tremble, Flash's voice was bold and certain. Honeypaw couldn't deny the truth behind his promise.

"Then by the powers of StarClan I give you your warrior name. Flash, from this day forward you will be known as Flashtail. SunClan honors your dedicated and bravery, we welcome you as a full warrior of SunClan!"

"Flashtail! Flashtail! Flashtail!" SunClan cheered their new warrior's name and Flashtail had a look of pride on his face, he already looked like a Clan cat. Honeypaw felt a rush of warmth watching the newest warrior.

"With our new warrior named," Dawnstar mewed to the Clan. "It's time for SunClan to leave." The cheering died down and a sense of fear came over the Clan. *We've all been dreading this.* "I want to say before we go, let's take a moment to honor those who have died in this territory. All those who gave their lives to defend it, every ceremony held under this very tree and every happy memory we've shared here." There was a long moment of silence as SunClan remembered the past in this camp. "It's sad to leave, but somewhere out there is a new camp for us. A new territory full of prey and herbs, to make new memories and for many more generations of warriors to be born. We are not leaving StarClan behind, they are

beside us as we make this journey."

After Dawnstar's speech, SunClan left the camp. Honeypaw found herself looking back on the camp. The den that she had become so familiar with. She knew this territory like the back of her paw. Honeypaw remembered playing with Falconpaw when they were kits, when she first discovered the joys of being a medicine cat and when she actually became Pebblestep's apprentice. She couldn't imagine never seeing her camp again, but she knew they were going somewhere better. *It's time to leave the past behind us.*

Hollykit and Burnkit were carried by their parents, they complained a little but were mostly awestruck by all that was going on. *This is the first and last time they'll ever see SunClan territory.* Honeypaw thought. *This one at least.*

Sandfoot walked with Applespots and Brackenpelt who was guiding Squirreltail through the forest. Squirreltail had barely left the forest since she lost her sight, she would hardly go to gatherings. Snakewhisker was with Adderstrike, he still had a slight limp but didn't look to be in any pain.

Falconpaw walked near Honeypaw and their parents, his amber eyes focused and stern. *I wonder what he's thinking about.* Honeypaw tried to pinpoint the emotion in his eyes, but couldn't place it. *I'm sure he's just as nervous as the rest of us.*

SunClan reached the gathering hollow and were the last ones to arrive. Honeypaw looked over the Clans, she had never seen it so full before. *Every cat in the forest is here.* Honeypaw saw Swankit, Ferretkit and Mothkit of MoonClan playing in the snow while their mother, Frostfire watched over them.

Honeypaw took a deep breath as they stepped into the gathering hollowing. "Sorry for being late." Dawnstar mewed once she reached the other leaders. "None of you knew, but we've been caring for a rogue who was injured. He decided to join our Clan today." Dawnstar motioned to Flashtail who looked suddenly overwhelmed by all the cats staring at him. *This is is first time meeting the other Clans.*

"You let a rogue join your Clan?" Riverstar narrowed her eyes, only she, Skyfeather and Blackpaw knew about Echoheart's attack. "Why?"

"Because he's already been hunting for our Clan and I trust him, he's loyal. It's not your decision to question. Flowerstar's mother was a kittypet."

"As was Seedclaw." Jaggedstar spoke up. "And he's one of my most loyal warriors." Honeypaw's eyes went to Seedclaw, a strong black and white tom. *Hard to believe he was ever a kittypet.*

"So we're all here." Shadowstar mewed, all eyes went to Jaggedstar. The LichenClan leader didn't look as scared as he did yesterday. *Maybe he decided to stay?*

"I don't want to keep you any longer, but there's a few things I need to say before you all leave." Honeypaw's heart dropped. "It's been such an honor being the leader of LichenClan." Jaggedstar looked over the Clans. "I couldn't have asked for a better life to live, and I know that Timbertail will do LichenClan proud." Timbertail dropped his head, amber eyes filling with pain. "Shadowstar," Jaggedstar faced the MoonClan leader. "Crowstar was a close friend of mine, and I know that our Clans haven't had the most peaceful history, but MoonClan is lucky to have a leader like you and I hope that there can be peace between our Clans."

"Thank you, Jaggedstar." Shadowstar dipped his head. "Crowstar spoke fondly of you, and I know that all of the Clans will remember you."

Jaggedstar's eyes turned to honey and he turned to Riverstar. "I know what's it's like to rule in the wake of a violent leader. You may have made some mistakes, but Riverstar you are one of the bravest cats I know. Follow your heart and I promise that you will guide your Clan into a bright future, brighter than they've ever seen." Riverstar's blue eyes filled with pain and love.

"That means a lot, Jaggedstar." She dipped her head. "I'm sorry to say goodbye to you, you've served the forest well."

"Finally, Dawnstar." Jaggedstar met Dawnstar's green gaze, Honeypaw could see that her mother wasn't ready to say goodbye to the LichenClan leader. "You are young, but you are very wise and brave. When Thornstar threatened us, you lead us all to victory and a safe home. You are an incredible leader and I know you will guide SunClan well."

"Jaggedstar," Dawnstar's voice trembled. "I think I speak for every cat here when I say it's been an honor to have known you. You are a brave, noble and kind leader. I always looked up to you, when I was a scared deputy I saw wisdom and peace in you. I wish it didn't have to be this way, but we will honor you every day. We will remember you forever and we will find a new home so your Clan can live in peace."

Jaggedstar's loving gaze faltered, filling with pain and sadness. "Thank you." His voice shook with emotion. "Nothing has hurt me more than to say goodbye to my Clan." He turned to his warriors. "I'm so proud of each and every one of you. You're the best Clan a leader could ask for, and I wish I could join you in your new home." His claws dug into the ground, Jaggedstar was clearly fighting his emotions. "Please, take care of each other and find your new home." Jaggedstar approached Timbertail. "Be brave, I know you will be an incredible leader and I'm proud to have called you my deputy. Take care of them." Jaggedstar dropped his head, unable to contain his emotions any longer.

A golden brown and white she-cat ran out from the LichenClan crowd. It was Maplepool, Jaggedstar's sister. "I love you so much." She wept into his fur. "Without you I don't know where I'd be." Jaggedstar wrapped his tail around Maplepool.

"I'll watch over you, just as Mossleaf is." Honeypaw looked for Falconpaw, he had looked at her as well. Honeypaw felt a surge of love of her brother. *I could never say goodbye to him.* After a few long moments, and the other cats gathering with their own siblings, Jaggedstar stood and faced the Clans. "Go forth, all of you. Find your new home, I'll meet you there."

Chapter 6

Falconpaw looked back at the forest with an uncertain, longing glance. Would this really be the last time he ever saw his home? The place where he was born and spent most of his apprenticeship? The Clans crossed through LichenClan's territory, the pain of saying goodbye to Jaggedstar was still fresh on every cat's mind. Falconpaw wondered what the LichenClan leader would do on his own. He hoped that the rest of Jaggedstar's life was peaceful.

Falconpaw looked around LichenClan territory, this was his first time ever being here. It was full of thick foliage and many fallen trees. The trees had no leaves and the bark was chipping away. *I wonder what this place looks like in greenleaf.* He imagined it to be very lush and green, not dead and falling apart.

Behind him, Falconpaw heard the eager mews of Hollykit and Burnkit, sharing their verbal awe at being outside of SunClan territory. *They're four moons old, but still too young to clearly understand what's happening.* Falconpaw vaguely remembered leaving SunClan territory for the fire as well as the battle against Thornstar, he had been excited too but also too young to realize the dangers.

Hollykit and Burnkit weren't the only excited kits, Sagekit and Hailkit of AshClan were equally as excited. They were younger than Hollykit and Burnkit, they had no idea what was happening. Then there was Mistkit, Slatekit and Dewkit. They were too young to even be excited. The rode on the back of Ashblaze who walked proudly beside Riverstar. Ferretkit, Mothkit and Swankit were also rather young, but they didn't need to be carried. The kits of LichenClan were in a similar situation, Briarkit and Krestlekit were young and excited, but Emberkit and Dapplekit were being carried by their father, Foxtail.

Most of the apprentices understood what was happening, they were old enough and they were all scared. Falconpaw noticed a small, brown and white she-cat he was pretty sure was named Rabbitpaw

walking close by Nightpaw, her head was ducked and her eyes full of fear.

Falconpaw was scared too, but he wouldn't show it. *I have to be brave for my Clanmates.* He held his head high and walked with certainty, despite the fears clawing at his heart. Falconpaw kept an eye on each of his Clanmates, Honeypaw was walking beside Pebblestep, both of their eyes filled with concern. Dawnstar was walking alongside the other leaders and Timbertail, along with their deputies. Cherryleaf was walking close beside Briarrose and Cloudspots, there was a sharp fear in Cherryleaf's eyes. Somehow, it didn't seem connected to what was happening. *What's wrong with her?* Falconpaw wondered.

"We're reaching the edge of LichenClan territory." Timbertail announced. "Beyond here is a thunderpath and a small twolegplace. We'll cross a sharp fence so be careful when going under it."

"What's a fence?" Feathercloud of MoonClan questioned, tilting her head slightly.

"It's a thing twolegs use to keep things in or out." Seedclaw of LichenClan added. "They usually have them in their gardens to keep their dogs inside the yard. However, fences like this are mostly to stop wild animals from getting into the twolegplace."

"Do they guard it?" Lilyclaw questioned.

Seedclaw shook his head. "Not usually no, most animals don't cross it. We should be fine." Falconpaw knew that Seedclaw used to be a kittypet, and he knew that Falconclaw wouldn't approve but right now, Falconpaw was glad they would have a kittypet to guide them in the twolegplace.

"Let's continue, then." Shadowstar mewed and the Clans continued on, leaving Clan territory. Once Falconpaw stepped outside of LichenClan territory he felt strange. *We're going to a place that no Clan cat has gone before, depending on StarClan to guide us.* Falconpaw recalled the owl that appeared at the gathering. *Will we see that again?*

The trees continued for a while, slowly thinning out until it opened into a field, turned completely white from the snow. From across the field Falconpaw could see a flat, gray strip of stone and strange twoleg buildings that reminded Falconpaw of his own trip into the twolegplace.

"When we cross the thunderpath you'll want to be quick, we'll cross in groups. Queens, kits and elders across first, then apprentices, then warriors, then the leaders." Timbertail spoke up once more. "Carry kits across and once you start running, don't stop until you reach the other side."

"He sure is good at taking charge." Tallsong whispered to Swiftheart not far from Falconpaw. "I see why Jaggedstar chose him as deputy."

The Clans crossed the field until they finally came to the thunderpath, Falconpaw had crossed one of these when he went to the twolegplace. He didn't realize how dangerous they were. This one was even bigger than the one he crossed. "Wait for a monster to appear, when I say go I want all queens, kits and elders to run across to the other side." Falconpaw's eyes went to Snakewhisker and Squirreltail, would they be able to cross? Snakewhisker still had a heavy limp and Squirreltail was blind.

Falconpaw watched as Squirreltail bit gently onto Sandfoot's tail, her mother was going to help her across. However, the fear was clear as day on their faces. Taking a deep, shaky breath, Falconpaw waited.

A roar sounded in the distance, getting closer and closer. In an instant, a monster tore across the thunderpath, faster than any cat could possibly run. It send fear deep into Falconpaw's belly. "Now!" Timbertail shouted and the group of elders and queens carrying their kits ran across the thunderpath.

Falconpaw didn't relax until every cat was safely on the other side. Snakewhisker sat down, licking his injured leg. *At least he made it across.* "Apprentices next." Falconpaw and the other apprentices made their way to the thunderpath, lining up across it's surface. Falconpaw stood close beside Honeypaw, he wanted to make sure

she crossed safely.

HIs sister was staring ahead, clearly trying to be brave, but her green eyes betrayed her fear and her body was incredibly tense. Falconpaw brushed his tail across her pelt, trying to help her relax. Honeypaw turned to look at him, meeting his gaze. Falconpaw gave his sister a reassuring nod. She nodded in return and took a deep breath, seeming a little more relaxed. On Falconpaw's other side was Nightpaw. His mind floated back to when she scarred his nose as a kit, and then when he attacked her during the battle against AshClan. He still felt a prick of annoyance as he thought of her, but he ignored it. *Now is not the time.*

Another monster tore past, ruffling the fur of all the apprentices and Timbertail shouted for them to go. Falconpaw broke into a sprint, his paws hitting the cold hard surface of the thunderpath. He pushed himself to run as fast as he could, but keeping a very close on Honeypaw as well.

Falconpaw's paws hit grass and he felt relief flood through his body. He made it safely as did Honeypaw. He looked towards the other SunClan apprentices, they had all made it as well, every apprentice had.

They waited patiently on the other side as the warriors, and then the leaders made their way across. When every cat was safely on the other side, the leader's gathered to talk. "Where do we go now?" Dawnstar questioned, looking around.

"It's nearly nightfall," Shadowstar pointed out. "We don't want to be out in the dark, we have no idea what could be out here."

"Shadowstar is right," Riverstar mewed. "We need to seek shelter for the night."

"We should go around the twolegplace, there is a small forest just on the other side." Seedclaw explained. "There should be places for shelter in there."

"Then let's hurry, it's getting colder by the minute." Riverstar urged and the Clans continued at a quick pace. They headed towards the

twolegplace until they came to the fence that Seedclaw had told them about. It was thin, hard tendrils with sharp thorns along it's length.

"There's a small hole we can crawl under," Seedclaw mewed, guiding them to the fence where a spot had been dug out. "Just be careful and watch your pelts." The Clans went under the fence with ease, when it came to be Falconpaw's turn he flattened himself against the ground, using his forepaws to pull himself from under it. He could feel the sharp thorns digging into his skin, but he stuck through the pain and made his way through.

Finally, the Clans could move on. They walked for a long while and Falconpaw's stomach was starting to growl and he wants the only one. His paws were numb from the cold and exhausted weighed down on him. The kits were complaining about being hungry and tired as well, and Snakewhisker's limp was heavy.

The forest came into view and they hurried for the shelter of the trees. Once inside the forest, it didn't take long for the Clans to find an old looking cave. It was small, but it would be able to provide shelter for all the Clan cats. "We need a hunting party to go and find as much food as possible." Dawnstar mewed. "It won't be a comfortable night but we'll be safe."

"Harewhisker, Lilyclaw, and Ravensong can go." Riverstar named her warriors.

"Pigeonpelt, Brokenclaw and Shadeflower will go." Shadowstar listed his own warriors.

"LichenClan sends Flamewhisker, Mudpelt and Rootscratch."

"Lionclaw, Redclaw and Heatherflight." Dawnstar named the SunClan warriors and the hunting patrols set out. Falconpaw somewhat wished he could've gone, but he was so tired that he didn't know if he could hunt.

The Clans settled in their makeshift shelter for the night, the hunting patrol couldn't find a lot of prey but enough to where that every cat had at least a bite or two. Falconpaw was cold, scared and

hungry but he curled up next to his sister and Sedgepaw, focusing on the warmth of his Clanmates. *We can do this.* He told himself. *The Clans will survive.*

Chapter 7

Nightpaw tensed up, putting all of her focus on the squirrel she was hunting. It's bright red fur was obvious against the white snow. So was Nightpaw's jet black pelt, but she was hidden among the brush. Nightpaw honed in on her prey and gave a jump, her claws extending and digging into the squirrel's flesh, killing it quickly. Feeling proud of her catch, Nightpaw picked it up and went to find Wheatwhisker.

She was also hunting with Stormheart, Cinderflame, Fawnheart and Sedgepaw of SunClan. It was weird to be hunting with cats from another Clan, also to be providing prey for another Clan. *We have to work together, but that doesn't mean it feels right.* Nightpaw was grateful that she hadn't had to hunt with Falconpaw yet, but she knew it was only a matter of time. Cinderflame was a nice cat, she was brave, confident and strong. Everything that Nightpaw wanted to know. Fawnheart was less nice, she was very snappy and somewhat rude but Sedgepaw nicer. Headstrong, but nice.

It had been two days since the Clans found the previous cave and they had since moved on from it. The Clans would find makeshift dens and shelters, hunt and move on the next day. Nightpaw wasn't sure how far they were from the old territories, but it felt like that had been travelling for countless moons. She missed the apprentice den, she missed the pine trees of AshClan. They had traversed forests, moorland and even a small twolegplace but they hadn't seen any pine trees.

Nightpaw longed for the scent of pine, the cool shelter of her territory. *But we can't go back there.* Nightpaw's heart twisted, she flicked her tail and continued on. *I hope our new territory has even more pine trees.* She spotted Wheatwhisker standing with Stormheart and the others. They had managed to catch a decent amount of prey and they weren't the only hunting party out right now. There were two others in other parts of this forest.

"There you are, Nightpaw." Wheatwhisker greeted his apprentice.

Nightpaw noticed Fawnheart's sharp green gaze digging into her but ignored the ill-tempered she-cat. *What is it with bad tempered SunClan cats.* Nightpaw thought, withholding a snort. "We should head back. The kits haven't eaten today."

The others agreed and headed back to the small makeshift camp that the Clans had made for the night. It was early morning and they were preparing to leave. The four leaders sat in the middle of the camp, Nightpaw noticed the medicine cats off in a corner talking amongst themselves. They had been gathering as many herbs as they could to prepare for anything.

Luckily, there hadn't been any incidents yet but Nightpaw had a feeling that it was only a matter of time. Nightpaw and the others dropped their prey on the temporary fresh-kill pile. This small camp felt so crowded with all of the cats occupying it. Nightpaw looked around, seeing cats from all four Clans talking with each other. Lilyclaw was talking with Applespots and Sandfoot, they looked like old friends.

When Thornstar had taken over AshClan, Nightpaw knew that Riverstar, Silvermoon, Haresong and Lilyclaw had all fled to SunClan camp and made a few friends. Silvermoon and Dawnstar had been friends since they were apprentices. Part of Nightpaw wished she could make friends with cats from other Clans but she didn't think it was a good idea. She could meet them in battle one day, and she didn't want to be forced to fight a friend. Nightpaw looked over to where Rabbitpaw, Dustpaw, Timberpaw and Leafpaw were all sitting. *Rabbitpaw is my friend, and she's a good friend. I don't need anyone other than her and Blackpaw.* Nightpaw turned to find her brother with the medicine cats. *Though we've barely spoken.* She flattened her ears, suddenly feeling alone.

"Everything alright?" A gentle voice spoke to Nightpaw, she looked up to see Crowstep. "You seem down."

"Yeah, I'm fine." Nightpaw lifted her head. "Just worried and all." She lied, her father didn't need to know about everything that was bothering her.

"It will be alright." Crowstep wrapped his tail around her shoulders.

"I know this is hard, but the Clans are working together and we'll make it to our new home." Nightpaw nodded along, but didn't feel that reassured by her father's words.

"Everyone get something to eat then it's time to leave." Riverstar called. The Clan cats quickly gathered near the fresh-kill pile to get something to eat. The elders, queens and kits going first and letting the others eat afterwards. When it came to Nightpaw's turn, the pile had gotten quite small.

"Hey," A sheepish voice spoke beside Nightpaw, she turned to see Rabbitpaw standing close beside her. "You want to share a piece? I know you're probably hungry but--"

"I'd love to." Nightpaw purred, cutting Rabbitpaw off before she went on a nervous ramble. Grabbing a squirrel from the fresh-kill pile, Nightpaw walked with Rabbitpaw near a tree. She let Rabbitpaw take the first bite and then started eating as well.

It didn't take long for the two she-cats to finish eating and join with the rest of the Clan cats. They finished eating and prepared to leave once again. Without much hesitation, the Clans headed out of the forest and into a vast field. In the distance, Nightpaw could see towering mountains in the distance. Something drew Nightpaw to those mountains. *I hope we get to see them.* Nightpaw thought, casting a glance at Rabbitpaw. The shy she-cat had her head ducked as usual but as they traveled more, she seemed to be getting slightly more confident.

The Clans travelled, barely stopping and covering wide ranges of land. Nightpaw had grown slightly accustomed to travelling. She had to admit that she liked seeing so many new places. She had seen twolegplaces, mountains and streams. Places that were unfamiliar, but filled her with a sense of adventure. Nightpaw felt constantly torn between wanting to see more and wanting to go back home.

Going back home isn't an option, Nightpaw reminded herself. *So I should enjoy the new sights, and focus on finding my brand new home.*

Chapter 8

Falconpaw dragged his paws through the thick snow, grumbling as the snow clung to his pelt. He despised the snow, it made hunting hard and stuck to his pelt. He was constantly shivering and his paws burned. With stinging ear tips, Falconpaw trudged through the snow beside Cherryleaf.

He glanced at his mentor who had a look of intense concern on her face. Throughout the entire journey, Cherryleaf had a look of fear in her eyes and Falconpaw couldn't place what it was. He was concerned for Cherryleaf, but he couldn't get her to tell him what was going on. They had been travelling for several days now, and he just wanted to stop. He missed his home and he missed sleeping in the apprentice den. Most nights the Clans slept in tiny dens without much moss. He longed for a den with only his fellow apprentices.

The Clans hadn't been in a forest in over two days and Falconpaw felt exposed. The mountains were getting closer, but still seemed so far away. The Clans followed a large gorge that had been going on for a long time. It was deep and every cat was warned to stay away from it for a risk of falling.

As they continued walking through the snow, Cherryleaf caught his attention even more. He narrowed his eyes at his mentor and finally decided to confront her. He weaved through the group of cats until he reached Cherryleaf.

"Hello, Falconpaw." She greeted kindly, but avoiding his gaze. "How are you?"

"I'm fine," Falconpaw replied. "How are *you*?"

Cherryleaf became visibly nervous. "I'm fine as well."
"You sure?" Falconpaw questioned. "You seem worried about something, and more worried than the rest of us. You looked scared."

Cherryleaf swallowed, flattened her ears every so slightly. "Don't worry about it, Falconpaw."

"So something *is* wrong." Falconpaw snorted. "I'm going to worry because you're my mentor and my Clanmate. If something is wrong I want to know."

Cherryleaf finally looked at him, flattened her ears and letting out a sad sigh. "Very well, I guess I should tell you. The only other cats who know are Pebblestep, your mother and Cloudspots, so don't go spreading it around, okay?" Falconpaw agreed, relieved to finally learn what was wrong with her. She lowered her voice and continued. "I'm expecting Cloudspots's kits."

Falconpaw's jaw dropped, that was the last news he had been expecting. "You're expecting kits? When did you find out about this?"

"Before we left." Cherryleaf mewed sadly. "I'm about a moon along." Falconpaw looked at Cherryleaf closer, she did seem bigger than usual.

"Wow." Falconpaw said, exasperated and unable to think of any other words to say. He sighed. "So, you'll be having them in about a moon."

Cherryleaf nodded slowly. "Yes." She said quietly, her voice pained. "I'm so scared for them, what if they're born while we're still travelling? How will they be strong enough to travel?"

"Maybe you should talk to Mosswind of MoonClan, she's expecting kits too right?" Falconpaw looked for the tortoiseshell she-cat. "Maybe you could be friends or something."

"Maybe." Cherryleaf seemed unsure, she also didn't seem like she wanted to talk about it anymore.

"I know I'm just an apprentice but," Falconpaw said awkwardly. "If you need any help, just let me know. I'll make to sure work extra hard for you and your kits when they're born."

Cherryleaf let out a soft purr. "Thank you, Falconpaw. That means a

lot." Falconpaw and Cherryleaf continued walking until Cherryleaf went to go talk to Briarrose. Not far from him, Breezepaw, Sorrelpaw and Fogpaw had started playing together.

Falconpaw rolled his eyes, ignoring the apprentices. He didn't feel like playing right now, his mind was too focused on Cherryleaf. She was expecting kits at the worst possible time. He wasn't mad at her, but he couldn't help but feel that she was making a mistake. What if the kits were born while they were travelling? He knew that Mosswind of MoonClan was also expecting kits, how could they make newborn kits travel?

"Can SunClan cats catch?" Breezepaw teased, batting a ball of snow at Sorrelpaw. The tortoiseshell she-cat quickly reacted and knocked it back. Fogpaw hit it down to the ground before Breezepaw could catch it.

"Please be careful." Ebonywing mewed, looking at her kits with concern. "You're getting too close to the edge."

Breezepaw rolled his blue eyes. "Don't worry, we'll be fine." The black and white apprentice jumped towards Sorrelpaw. She playfully bounded away, jumping up as he swiped at her legs.

"Honestly you two." Brackenpelt sighed. "This is taking long enough without you lot acting like a bunch of foxes in a fit."

"Sorry." Sorrelpaw purred, flicking her tail playfully. "But it's fun playing with Breezepaw, even if he is from MoonClan." She shot a challenging glance at the apprentice.

"Say that to my face!" Breezepaw jumped, tackling Sorrelpaw to the ground. The two apprentices rolled through the snow, kicking up a flurry of powder. They stopped rolling, Sorrelpaw landing on top of Breezepaw and the two laughed happily.

Falconpaw actually felt a little bit of joy watching the two of them play. *Even in a horrible time like this, they can still find joy. That's good for them.* Falconpaw's ears twitched as he heard a crack. He looked around, looking for the source. As he turned his head away from Breezepaw and Sorrelpaw he heard a bone chilling screech. He

whipped around and saw that the ground underneath the two apprentices started to give way. The stone crumbled underneath them and shook under their paws.

"Sorrelpaw!" Larkpaw cried out to her sister, running closer to her only to be stopped by Yarrowtail, his green eyes filled with horror. Breezepaw and Sorrelpaw scrambled to their paws, running away from the edge, but as the ledge gave out they were no longer ground level. Breezepaw gave a mighty jump off the falling rock, landing safely on the snow. However, Sorrelpaw was still falling.

Feeling something similar to when he saved Sedgepaw, Falconpaw rushed forward. *I got you, Sorrelpaw!* He thought, pushing himself to run harder and faster.

"Falconpaw! Come back!" Dawnstar shouted behind him, but he ignored his mother and kept running. He nearly reached the edge, reaching out to grab Sorrelpaw but the tortoiseshell she-cat fell out of his reach. He locked eyes with her, watching her as she fell into the freezing water down below, crying the entire way.

Her body hit the water and Sorrelpaw vanished under the surface, surely being dragged away by the rushing current. He watched the water, waiting for her head to poke up, but nothing happened. He laid frozen in place, his paw still outstretched over the edge. The look of terror in Sorrelpaw's amber eyes and the sounds of her cries as she fell to her death was burned into his mind.

Falconpaw heard pawsteps behind him in the snow and looked over his shoulder to see Lionclaw standing a few taillengths again. "Falconpaw, come on." His father's eyes were dark and pained. Falconpaw couldn't find his voice, so he just stood up and walked over to his father. He looked up at Lionclaw, waiting for him to say something, anything. Then Falconpaw remembered Larkpaw, he looked to the young she-cat and saw her with wide eyes, staring at the ledge where her sister had fallen. *She's watched both her siblings die. I just wish I could've saved Sorrelpaw.* His heart twisted into knots. *I should've been able to save her, I should've moved faster.*

"This was your fault." Larkpaw let out a dangerous growl, her fierce green eyes filled with hatred as she looked at Breezepaw. "You

knew it was dangerous but you kept playing with her!" Breezepaw flattened his ears, he looked just as horrified as Larkpaw. Falconpaw noticed Larkpaw's claws were out and she bared her teeth.

"Larkpaw I--I didn't mean for that to happen." Breezepaw stammered.

"You killed my sister!" Larkpaw jumped forward, tackling the MoonClan apprentice to the ground. They kicked up a flurry of snow and Larkpaw hissed in rage. Brackenpelt raced to his daughter's side and pulled Larkpaw off Breezepaw, nearly throwing her to the side.

"That's *enough*, Larkpaw!" He shouted. Larkpaw flattened herself to the ground, flattening her ears.

"Breezepaw knew the dangers but so did Sorrelpaw. This is not his fault and taking your anger out on him won't bring her back!" Larkpaw stared at her father, eyes wide with shock and pain. The cold air filled with an uncomfortable silence. "There's nothing we can do to bring her back." Brackenpelt's voice trembled. "But we can't start fighting among the Clans now, Sorrelpaw would want us to continue and find a new home where you can be safe. Fighting with Breezepaw won't fix anything."

Larkpaw closed her eyes and turned away, running to Squirreltail's side and burying her nose in her mother's ginger fur, Rosewind stood beside them as well. Falconpaw looked at his paws. *We've already lost one of our cats. How many more are we going to have to lose?*

Chapter 9

All the Clans had been shaken up by the death of SunClan's apprentice, Sorrelpaw. It had been a horrible thing to watch. Listening to the apprentice's cries of fear as she fell to her death. Blackpaw couldn't get rid of the sound. They had searched for thyme to give to Larkpaw after shock set in. They had managed to find a little bit, which was enough for Larkpaw. The Clans stayed two days in a small forest camp they had found, not far from the gorge, but the hard truth was they had to continue. Losing Sorrelpaw was hard, and Blackpaw wished he could give Larkpaw more time to rest but they had to move on.

They had just started their day of travel and the air was frigid. Biting at Blackpaw's ear tips and nose. It was snowing heavily, covering the pelts of every cat. Blackpaw paid close attention to the kits and elders. Most kits were being carried, he noticed Snakewhisker had a heavy limp. Blackpaw grit his teeth and continued forward, praying that they would stop soon. *I know we have to get to our new home, but we're risking every cat if we travel like this.*

Behind him, Blackpaw heard a cough. He turned his head and saw Harewhisker with his head ducked, his shoulders heaving as he coughed. "Are you alright?" Ravensong asked from beside him.

"I'm okay," Harewhisker replied, his voice dry and raspy. "Just swallowed a snowflake." *That's what they all say.* Blackpaw wasn't convinced, and judging by the snort from Skyfeather, he wasn't either.

Skyfeather pushed his way through the crowd up to Riverstar. Blackpaw quickly followed, trying to keep up with his mentor in the snow. "Riverstar," He spoke up, getting the leader's attention. Riverstar fixed her blue gaze on Skyfeather and Blackpaw.

"Yes?"

"Harewhisker is coughing, I want every cat to keep an eye out for catmint. Harewhisker won't be the last one to get sick and we don't need it spreading." Skyfeather's tone was harsh, Blackpaw figured that he and Riverstar still hadn't mended their relationship after their earlier argument.

"Alright, I'll let the other leaders know and we'll keep an eye out." Riverstar didn't say anything else, she just turned her head to Shadowstar and soon enough the news spread throughout the Clans.

As the day dragged on, two more cats started coughing including Rainypelt and Swiftheart. Blackpaw did his best to not let his fears consume him, but this was his biggest fear about travelling. Cats getting sick on the journey and having no way of curing them. How would they find any catmint when they were constantly moving? And sick cats couldn't travel, they wouldn't have the strength. What if a kit gets sick?

The questions in Blackpaw's mind became overwhelming, his paws started to shake and he couldn't focus on where he was going. He felt something touch his pelt, causing him to nearly jump off the ground. His mind focused on the world around him and he saw Honeypaw looking at him with concern in her green eyes.

"Are you alright?" She questioned. "Sorry I didn't mean to scare you." She flattened her ears slightly, looking bashful.

"It's okay." Blackpaw assured her. "I was just lost in thought."

"Oh," Honeypaw looked at the ground. "I know that a few cats are sick, including Harewhisker.

"Yeah, Rainypelt and Stormheart as well. Are any cats in SunClan sick?" Blackpaw asked out of concern for Honeypaw's Clan.

"I don't think so, but Squirreltail was sounding raspy this morning." Honeypaw explained. "And I think I heard Shorttail complaining of a sore throat." She sighed. "I hope our new home is close." Honeypaw turned her green gaze up towards the cloudy sky. Blackpaw could see the pain and fear in her eyes and he wished he could do more to help her. *I wish she didn't have to go through this.*

"Hopefully we find some catmint soon," Honeypaw looked back at Blackpaw. "We haven't seen a twolegplace in a few days, they usually have catmint in gardens."

"I hope we don't have to go too deep into a twolegplace." Blackpaw admitted. "I'm not a fan of them."

"Neither am I but if there's catmint in there I'll risk it." Blackpaw admired her bravery, the thought of stepping into a twolegplace was enough to send him running. During the journey they had only been on the outskirts of a twolegplace, they had never strayed in far enough to find any twolegs, dogs or kittypets.

"How is Larkpaw?" Blackpaw questioned, changing the subject.

"Still in shock, but she's managing to travel. Getting her to eat has been hard, luckily Squirreltail has been able to convince her. I can't imagine what it must be like for her, losing both her siblings."

"Rosewind is her sister too, right?" Blackpaw checked.

"Yeah, but Rosewind was born much earlier than Larkpaw, Pikepaw and Sorrelpaw. They're siblings but they're not as close." Honeypaw explained.

"I see." Blackpaw thought about his own sister. He and Nightpaw hadn't been that close lately. The guilt began eating at him more and more. He even saw Falconpaw and Honeypaw spending time together. Ever since Sorrelpaw's death, Blackpaw's feelings for Falconpaw had changed slightly. Falconpaw had charged forward, trying to save his Clanmate despite the risk of falling.

Maybe there's more to Falconpaw than his arrogance. The pain in his eyes after Sorrelpaw fell showed that Falconpaw really did care for cats other than himself. *Maybe it was unfair of me to judge him so harshly.* Blackpaw wondered. *He kind of reminds of Nightpaw, they both want to be loyal warriors.*

They Clans continued to travel, Honeypaw and Blackpaw walking together for most of it until Dawnstar called Honeypaw over. Blackpaw was left walking essentially by himself, there were cats

around him but he wasn't talking to anyone. His mind was wandering, and he found himself begging to StarClan to either protect the Clans for sickness, or provide enough catmint for them to treat their Clanmates. Blackpaw just wanted his Clan to survive, and he would do everything he could to make that happen.

Chapter 10

Everything was getting worse. Sickness was spreading and acting quickly, Rainypelt and Shorttail struggled to walk as the Clans travelled, and Squirreltail and Harewhisker were only getting worse. Snakewhisker, Timberpaw and Sagekit had all started coughing as well, Nightpaw feared the worst for the Clans, especially for little Sagekit. She mostly rode on Puddleclaw's back while Hailkit trekked along beside them. Nightpaw feared that Silvermoon's tiny kits would get sick, and she knew they wouldn't survive.

Please, StarClan. Nightpaw prayed, looking up at the cloudy sky. Please don't let any cats die. The Clans were already concerned for their friends and family. Nightpaw glanced over at Rabbitpaw, she was ridden with fear for her brother. Nightpaw wished she could help Rabbitpaw, but there was nothing she could do. I can't cure sickness, that's up to the medicine cats. Nightpaw wondered how much longer they could keep travelling before the sick cats couldn't travel any longer.

It couldn't be long, Rainypelt was barely walking as is. Nightpaw felt a constant sense of fear weighing over her. Surely this can't be what StarClan wanted for us? Travelling through snow while our Clanmates slowly die without any herbs. Nightpaw forced herself to keep her head high. I can't let my fear consume me. She swallowed her doubts and fear, pushing herself to keep walking despite the cold, despite the sickness and despite her fears.

There was heavy coughing from inside the group of cats, Nightpaw turned her head to see Shorttail shaking. His head was low to the ground and his entire body shook violently as he coughed. That can't be good.

Roseheart ran to her Clanmates, giving him a slight sniff. "I don't think we can travel much longer." She spoke up, getting Timbertail's attention. The LichenClan leader quickly padded up to Shorttail and Roseheart.

"No," Shorttail croaked out. "I'm fine, we need to keep moving."

"You're not fine." Roseheart argued, her voice filled with concern. "You can barely walk, and your cough is getting worse."

"We should find shelter." Ravenheart stepped closer. "We need to give our sick cats a chance to rest."

"But we've barely moved at all today." Ashblaze argued.

"I'd rather take longer to get there than lose any warriors to sickness." Ravenheart snapped, the AshClan deputy flattened his ears.

"Very well," Riverstar mewed. "We'll start looking for shelter for tonight, we should also send a patrol of healthy cats to hunt and try and find herbs."

The Clans hurried up with their travels with Roseheart staying close to Shorttail, helping him walk alongside his Clanmates. Nightpaw felt unsettled by the elder's stark appearance. His bones were clearly visible under his brown pelt, which was gaunt and dull. His amber eyes were void of shine and hope, they were dark and glossy. Part of Nightpaw had a very strong feeling that Shorttail wouldn't survive this journey, she just hoped she was wrong.

It took until sunset for the Clans to find a cave to take shelter in. The sick cats were taken off to another smaller cave to be cared for by the medicine cats and to keep them from spreading their sickness. As Timberpaw was led away, Nightpaw watched Rabbitpaw and her siblings watch with fearful eyes. Timberpaw didn't look much better than Shorttail, whitecough took him over incredibly quickly. Please don't take Timberpaw. Nightpaw prayed once more.

Once the Clans settled down, a patrol consisting of Rainears, Snowtail, Wheatwhisker, Haresong, Tallsong, Ebonywing, Foxtail and Stumptail was sent out to hunt and hopefully find herbs. Nightpaw padded up to Rabbitpaw, hoping to help her relax despite her brother's condition.

Rabbitpaw was sitting alone, staring out the entrance of the larger den, her green eyes focused on the smaller den full of sick cats. "You should get some sleep." Nightpaw said quietly, sitting beside her friend.

"I don't see how I could." Rabbitpaw said, her voice nearly a whisper. "I haven't been able to sleep since Timberpaw got sick. I have this sinking feeling in my chest, it's overwhelming." She closed her eyes. "I'm scared that Timberpaw is going to die."

Nightpaw pressed against her friend, trying to keep both of them warm. "Rabbitpaw, Timberpaw is under the care of every medicine cat. They may not have many herbs but they have the skills and the training to take care of him. They'll do everything they can."

"But what if it's not enough?" Rabbitpaw met Nightpaw's gaze, her green eyes full of fear, love and terror. Nightpaw took in her green eyes, they reminded her of newleaf. Full of life and hope and filling NIghtpaw with the same feelings.

Nightpaw wished she could tell Rabbitpaw that everything would be okay, that Timberpaw would walk away from this just fine but she couldn't, she would be lying. Nightpaw had no clue if TImberpaw or any of the others would survive this sickness or this journey. They had already lost Sorrelpaw and she wouldn't be the final death.

"I don't know." Nightpaw breathed the words out, despite how much they hurt her. "I wish I could tell you." Rabbitpaw broke away, staring at her paws. "But," Nightpaw pressed even closer against Rabbitpaw. "No matter what happens, I'll be right there by your side. I will always be there for you, no matter what."

Rabbitpaw looked up once more, green eyes trembling. "You promise?"

"I do." Nightpaw resting her tail on Rabbitpaw's shoulder. "I promise I will always be there. Whenever you need me, I'll be right there to protect you."

Rabbitpaw fell against Nightpaw, taking her by surprise. Her heart

began to race as she felt Rabbitpaw's slightly trembling body against hers. Nightpaw stared at Rabbitpaw who now had her eyes closed, clearly thinking deeply. I promise, Rabbitpaw. Nightpaw repeated in her head. I promise I will always be there for you.

Nightpaw woke up to heavy coughing beside her. She lifted her head, expecting to find herself in the AshClan apprentice den, but instead in a strange den surrounded by all four Clans. She reminded herself of where she was and focused on her surroundings, trying to figure out where the coughing had came from.

The coughing started up again and Nightpaw's heart froze as she realized it was coming from Rabbitpaw. The apprentice was sitting upright, hunched over and coughing heavily. "Rabbitpaw." Nightpaw's voice shook. "Are you alright?"

Rabbitpaw opened her mouth to respond but was cut off by another bout of violent coughing. Dustpaw and Leafpaw had woken up and were at their sister's side in an instant, as was Haresong, who hurried across the cave to her daughter. "Rabbitpaw." She cried out. "Let's get you to the--"

"Is Rabbitpaw sick?" Nightpaw looked to see Skyfeather, Blackpaw and Roseheart standing in the entrance of the cave, their eyes filled with sadness and exhaustion. A feeling of unease swept over her as she locked eyes with Blackpaw. Something's happened.

"She is." Haresong spoke up, running over to Blackpaw and Skyfeather. "How is Timberpaw?"

Blackpaw avoided her gaze, staring at the snowy ground while Skyfeather flattened his ears. "I'm sorry, Haresong." Skyfeather mewed gently. Oh no. Nightpaw's heart dropped. "Timberpaw died in his sleep, there was nothing more we could do."

"No!" Rabbitpaw cried out from beside Nightpaw, coughing immediately as she spoke. Haresong's legs gave out and she sat down, dropping her head.

"My dear Timberpaw..." She whimpered. "How could this happen!"

She shouted. The rest of the Clans had woken up now and gathered around the medicine cats. "This is your fault!" Haresong was suddenly on her paws again, inches from Skyfeather's face. "You made us leave! It's because we left our home that Timberpaw is dead!"

"It wouldn't have been any better in our old home!" Skyfeather shouted in return. "If we stayed then I can guarantee all of your kits would be dead by the end of leaf-bare!" Haresong lashed out at Skyfeather but the medicine cat easily dodged her claws. Dustpaw and Leafpaw ran to their mother's side, helping steady her and whispering quietly to her. "Blackpaw," Skyfeather looked at his apprentice, voice dry. "Take Rabbitpaw with the others."

Blackpaw nodded and approached Nightpaw and Rabbitpaw. "Come on, Rabbitpaw." He helped her to her paws and let her lean against him.

"Can I help?" Nightpaw blurted out. "Surely there's something I can do."

Blackpaw shook his head. "I'm sorry Nightpaw, I know she's your friend but there's nothing you can do to help her right now. Let us take care of her." Blackpaw's words cut into her heart like claws. Nothing I can do. Nightpaw locked eyes with Rabbitpaw once more. I'm so sorry. She watched helplessly as Blackpaw took Rabbitpaw away.

Haresong, Dustpaw and Leafpaw went deeper into the cave to grieve Timberpaw and pray for Rabbitpaw. Nightpaw stood alone, wanting to run after Rabbitpaw and make everything better for her.

"Roseheart," Skyfeather turned to the LichenClan medicine cat. "You should tell them about Shorttail." Nightpaw's ears flattened. He's dead too.

Roseheart nodded, getting the attention of the rest of the Clans. "Timberpaw wasn't the only death last night, Shorttail died as well. He died in his sleep." She dropped her head. "I wish I could've done more."

Foxtail, Roseheart's brother, stepped out from the crowd, touching his nose to her cheek. "We know that you did everything you could, Roseheart. Shorttail was old he couldn't fight the sickness." But Timberpaw could've. Nightpaw's stomach twisted in knots. If Timberpaw couldn't fight it...then how could Rabbitpaw?

"We need to find herbs." Dawnstar spoke up. "Before we lose any more cats."

"Last night while we were patrolling," Rainears mewed. "We saw a twolegplace in the distance. Twolegs often have catmint in their gardens, I suggest we go there and try and find some."

"We could also try asking for help." Seedclaw suggested.

"You're saying we should get help from kittypets?" Ashblaze's fur stood on end, Nightpaw couldn't help but agree.

Seedclaw shook his head. "No, but maybe we could find some place to stay in the twolegplace, not a twoleg nest or anything like that but they often have shelters. It won't hurt to ask."

"Seedclaw is right." Timbertail mewed, giving a nod of respect towards Seedclaw. "We need to put our pride aside and ask for help. I don't like it anymore than the rest of you, but our Clanmates lives' are in danger."

"Then I suggest we hold a vigil for Shorttail and Timberpaw then try and find this twolegplace. Our lives depend on it."

Chapter 11

"Let's get going." Shadowstar spoke up once the elders had returned from burying Shorttail and Timberpaw. There was a heavy cloud of pain and sorrow that shadowed the four Clans, there were three cats on this journey who had died and cats were still sick. Honeypaw had stayed with the sick cats all night and a lot of them were already getting worse. Rainypelt was one of the worst, she was old and about as bad as Shorttail had been.

Now Timberpaw's sister, Rabbitpaw was sick and she was already coming down with greencough. Waking up to find both Timberpaw and Shorttail dead had been incredibly painful for all medicine cats involved. Honeypaw prayed that this twolegplace would have catmint and they could find shelter to let the sick cats recover. *If we continue without letting them heal I fear that we'll lose all of them.*

Honeypaw looked at her own sick Clanmates, Snakewhisker and Squirreltail. Larkpaw was still torn apart over the death of both Pikepaw and Sorrelpaw, Honeypaw couldn't imagine what would happen if she lost her mother as well. *I have to keep Squirreltail alive, I can't watch Larkpaw be in pain any longer.* Honeypaw watched Snakewhisker limp alongside Pebblestep, luckily he didn't seem to be as sick as the others. Sagekit also wasn't as sick as the others which Honeypaw was grateful for. *Last thing we need is a dead kit, they give us hope.*

Honeypaw was also thankful that Sagekit had been the only sick kit, all the others including the newly born ones had remained healthy. *Thank StarClan for that.* Timberpaw however had been quite young, younger than even Larkpaw.

Honeypaw joined up with Pebblestep and the other medicine cats, she tried to meet Blackpaw's gaze but he was staring at his paws. *I know what it's like to lose a cat.* Honeypaw thought back to Bramblepelt, not wanting to sleep due to his condition and waking up to find him dead. Blackpaw had wanted to stay up but the others, including Honeypaw had convinced him to sleep. *I know*

what he's feeling, but I also know he wouldn't have been able to do anything anyway.

Letting Blackpaw be, Honeypaw walked beside Pebblestep as the Clans gathered to leave. The sick cats stayed near the medicine cats so they could keep an eye on any cat in case they look to be in any worse condition. Once every cat was accounted for, the Clans left their cave towards the twolegplace, Rainears and the rest of last night's patrol assured them that it wasn't far.

They hadn't been travelling for very long when Honeypaw sat the twolegplace through the trees. It wasn't very big, probably one of the smallest ones they had seen yet. Honeypaw hoped that they would be able to find shelter and catmint. The Clans were eager to reach the twolegplace, but the leader's had decided that they wouldn't go to deep into the twolegplace and only patrols would go deeper inside of them.

The Clans neared the edge of the twolegplace and Honeypaw instantly caught the scent of cats, and it was strong. "There's a lot of cats around here." Dawnstar spoke up. "Be on the lookout, hopefully they're just harmless kittypets but we could run into some aggressive rouges if we're not careful."

Nearly every cat was on alert, sniffing around them. They approached the twolegplace, Honeypaw could see a fence rising up close to them and the smell of cat grew stronger. There was a shuffling in the trees around them and suddenly every cat was on alert. "We can hear you." Riverstar called into the trees, her fur bristling. "Show yourself!"

Two cats stepped out of the trees, a red brown she-cat with green eyes and a gray tabby tom with icy blue eyes. "Sorry, we didn't mean to sneak up on you." The she-cat apologized, casting a glance at the tom next to her. "I've just never seen this many cats in one group before, we weren't sure if you were hostile or not."

"We're not hostile," Dawnstar stepped forward. "We're actually looking for help."

"We can try and help." The tom replied. "My name is Night and this

is my friend Juniper." Honeypaw looked closer at the two cats, they both had colorful tendrils around their necks, she was pretty sure Seedclaw had called them collars. These two were both kittypets.

"It's nice to meet you," Juniper dipped her head. "What can we help you with?"

"We have cats sick with greencough and we are in search of some catmint, we also need a shelter where we can let them recover." Shadowstar explained. "Preferably not with twolegs." Night and Juniper exchanged a confused glance.

Seedclaw stepped forward, facing the kittypets. "We need catnip, it helps cure sickness that our cats have. If there's an empty barn around here we could stay at."

"I'm not sure about any barns but I think that Harvey has some catnip in his garden." Night explained. "He lives over on the far side of the twolegplace, it's the old looking brown house at the end. It has a big tall white fence, there's a hole in the side where you can get it. Harvey is usually laying on the top of it."

"Thank you." Dawnstar dipped her head. "We'll try and find it."

"So," Night interjected. "Are you like, wild cats or something?" He tilted his head.

"We're warriors," Riverstar explained. "We used to live in a forest far from here but it began to die so we had to move. We live in four different Clans usually but we're travelling together to find our new home."

"So you live in the wild and hunt?" Juniper questioned.

"Yes we hunt and patrol our territories, we live in the forest and take care of each other." Timbertail "But we really have to get going, we have very sick cats including a sick kit."

"Then you should hurry." Night urged. "We hope you find your new home!"

"Thank you." Shadowstar dipped his head and the Clans walked

around the outskirts of the twolegplace.

"At least we met some nice kittypets." Crowfur mewed to Rainears. "I was worried we'd meet some rogues or dogs. Last thing we need right now is a fight.

"You're right, let's just hope this Harvey is as nice as they were and he will give us some of that catmint." Rainears added. "And hopefully he knows somewhere we can stay." Honeypaw nodded along with the two she-cats, hoping that they would have everything they needed despite the uncertainty clawing at her chest.

The Clans walked around the edge of the twolegplace until they found the old brown house that Night had described along with the tall white fence. On top of the fence was a brown tom sunning himself.

"Excuse us!" Dawnstar called up to the cat, he lifted his head and revealed a face lined with white fur and pale amber eyes. "Are you Harvey?"

"I am Harvey." He called back. "Who are ya'll? I ain't never seen this big a' group of cats before."

"My name is Dawnstar, this is Shadowstar, Riverstar and Timbertail. We're four Clans of warriors who are travelling to find a new home. We're looking for shelter and for some catmi--catnip to treat some sick cats that we have. We were told by two kittypets named Night and Juniper that you'd be able to help."

Harve narrowed his eyes, then nodded jumping down from his fence. "Sure, I'd like to help. My garden is overgrown with catnip since my housefolk is too old to pick it. Maybe if I give some of it to ya'll it will keep the nosy cats outta my garden."

"Thank you so much, you have no idea how much this means to us." Shadowstar dipped his head.

"I ain't never turn down cats in need. Why don't some of you follow me inside to get some of that catnip for ya."

"The medicine cats should go." Timbertail suggested and at his word, Honeypaw and the other medicine cats padded through a hole in the fence. They stepped inside the garden which was filled with the mouth watering scent of catmint. Harvey wasn't joking when he said his garden was overgrown with it. There was a smaller gray fence with catmint growing through the gaps. Hope flooded Honeypaw's heart. *There's enough here for every sick cat!* She had to stop herself from jumping with joy.

"Thank you so much for sharing this with us." Pebblestep mewed. "You have no idea how much this means to us."

"Nah, I get it." Harvey mewed, guiding the medicine cats to the plant. "I have no use for it, I have my housefolk to care for me but I know the struggle of living in the wild. Take as much as y'all like."

The medicine cats did just that, gathering as much catmint as they could carry. Honeypaw wanted so desperately to enjoy it for herself, but she wouldn't dare. *This is for Sagekit, and Rainypelt and Squirreltail. They all need much more than I do.*

Harvey led them out of the garden and back to the four Clans. The leaders looked on in hope and awe as they saw how much catmint the medicine cats had. "Now, what did you say about needin' a shelter?" Harvey questioned.

"We need a place to stay while we let our cats recover." Timbertail explained. "Do you know of any place like that?"

"As a matter of fact I do." Harvey nodded. "There's a big empty barn not far from here, towards the mountains. The housefolk who used to live there left it long ago. There should be more than enough room for every single one of you.

"Thank you so much." Shadowstar dipped his head.

"However, I should warn you about something," Harvey added. "It's close to a den of coyotes."

"What are coyotes?" Dawnstar questioned.

"Have you ever seen foxes?" Dawnstar nodded. "They're like foxes

but bigger and meaner. They'll kill cats without a second thought. They're scary, but they have a horrible scent that you'll be able to detect easily. If you stay in the barn and don't go too far behind it you should be okay. If you think they're nearby, hide in the barn and wait for them to leave."

"Are you sure we'll be safe?" Riverstar mewed, concern lining her voice. "Coyotes sound dangerous."

"They're dangerous alright but if stay in that barn you should be safe, they're more active at night so just be wary. Like I said, you'll smell 'em before you see 'em." Harvey added, sitting down.

"Are you sure we should go there?" Violetfur questioned Shadowstar. "Those coyotes seem dangerous."
"I think if we follow his advice we should be fine." Shadowstar mewed. "We don't have much of an option, it's close by and it will allow our sick cats to get some rest."

"I think we should go." Riverstar chimed in.

"Me too." Dawnstar added and Timbertail agreed as well. "Thank you for all your help, Harvey." Dawnstar purred. "It's invaluable to us, and I hope you know how much we appreciate it."

"I do, I just wish ya'll save travels. Hope ya'll find what you're looking for." The Clans bid farewell to Harvey and hurried in the directions of the mountains. They moved as quickly as the could, Honeypaw could feel the biting cold of snow approaching. They weren't far from the twolegplace and Harvey's home when they spotted the barn.

Night was approaching and none of them wanted to be caught out by the coyotes, so they hurried to the barn. Once the reached it, the leader's sent in some warriors to check it for any other animals inside. Honeypaw tried to smell for the coyotes but she couldn't scent anything other than the catmint.

The warriors cleared the barn and the rest of the Clans went inside. Honeypaw took a moment to look around, it was large and empty with plenty of room for every cat here, even for them to separate a

little.

However, the medicine cats didn't take much time to look around. Inside the barn was large piles of hay that they made into nests for the sick cats and started treating them with catmint. Honeypaw gave a few leaves to Snakewhisker. "Thank you." He purred with a dry throat and quickly ate the leaves before settling down to sleep. The first cats to get the catmint were Rainypelt and Sagekit. Once every cat was treated, the medicine cats started helping build nests for every other cat.

"How are Sagekit and Stormheart?" Puddleclaw asked Skyfeather a few taillengths away.

"Too soon to say but Sagekit wasn't as sick as some of the others," Skyfeather replied. "I think she'll be just fine after a few days and Stormheart is strong, he'll recover as well."

"Thank you so much." Puddleclaw nuzzled her brother. "We're lucky to have you as a medicine cat."

"It's my pleasure." Skyfeather dipped his head and watched Puddleclaw return to Hailkit who had already fallen asleep in her new nest. Honeypaw watched as Haresong approached Skyfeather as well, they hadn't spoken since their earlier argument about Timberpaw's death.

"Skyfeather," She said sheepishly. "I want to apologize for what I said earlier, I was just so upset. Timberpaw was so young, I wish he didn't have to die."

"I wish he didn't either," Skyfeather lowered his head. "Blackpaw and I did everything we could to save him, but the sickness was just too great, but now that we have catmint Rabbitpaw will make a full recovery. I know I can't bring Timberpaw back but I can keep Rabbitpaw alive."

"I know, thank you." Haresong dipped her head. "It was so hard losing Grasstail in the battle against Thornstar, he never even knew about his kits." She flattened her ears. "I hope he's taking care of Timberpaw now."

"I'm sure he is, Haresong." Skyfeather rested his tail on Haresong's shoulders. "Go get some rest, I'll let you know first thing in the morning how Rabbitpaw is doing."

"Thank you." Haresong dipped her head and turned back, joining Dustpaw and Leafpaw in a nest. Honeypaw felt touched by the moment, for the first time in moons things were looking up for the Clans. Honeypaw watched Larkpaw and Rosewind curl up with Brackenpelt, surely relieved that Squirreltail would recover.

Honeypaw curled up in a nest beside Pebblestep. Blackpaw's nest was just beside hers, he was close enough that she could feel his warmth. It made Honeypaw's heart beat a little faster. She closed her eyes, dreaming of a beautiful new future with her Clanmates.

Chapter 12

For the first time since the Clans had started their journey, everything seemed more hopeful. Nearly every sick cat had recovered from their sickness with the exception of Rainypelt who had passed away in her sleep the night they got to the barn. Ravenheart had said that her sickness had been too much for her to handle, even with the catmint. The loss of the MoonClan elder was sad, but they had been here a few days now and the cats were recovering. Sagekit was back playing with Hailkit and Stormheart right there to watch.

Much to Nightpaw's joy, Rabbitpaw was recovering. She still had a rattling cough but she was in better spirits, though she was still grieving the death of her brother. Nightpaw was just happy to see her up and walking around. The barn had provided warm shelter for the Clans and was crawling with mice. Most cats went to sleep satisfied, they weren't full but they weren't hungry and that was more than what they had been dealing with back in the forest.

Nightpaw had really enjoyed staying in this barn, and they hadn't seen any signs of the coyotes that Harvey had warned them about. They would patrol around the barn to check for any scents but no cat had found anything, only the faint scent of another cat, Nightpaw assumed it was just a rogue.

Every cat had found high hopes about this journey now that their sick were healing and they had a place to fill up their bellies and get some rest. However, most cats were eager to leave and Nightpaw knew they would be leaving in the next few days. They still had to find a new home, the four Clans couldn't live in this one barn together forever. *We are still four Clans.* Nightpaw reminded herself. Nightpaw had grown quite accustomed to hunting with the other Clans, she had even made a good friend in the MoonClan apprentice Rainpaw. She was energetic, smart and a great hunter.

Nightpaw's favorite cat to hunt with would always be Rabbitpaw, but while Rabbitpaw was sick it was nice to hunt with a nice cat like Rainpaw. Since they had been staying in one place,

Wheatwhisker had continued training Nightpaw, as had many of the other mentors. Though they never strayed too far from the barn as Harvey had said not to. Nightpaw was curious about coyotes, but didn't want to get close enough to one to learn.

Nightpaw's ears perked up as she heard the sound of the hunting patrol returning. She looked towards the entrance of the barn to see the small patrol returning. They brought back a small amount of prey, but the rest of the cats had caught a lot of mice in the barn so they still had a decently sized fresh-kill pile.

Nightpaw searched for Rabbitpaw, spotting the small apprentice talking with Blackpaw. Nightpaw quickly padded over to the fresh-kill pile, picking up three mice to share with Rabbitpaw and Blackpaw then joined the two cats. "Hungry?" She questioned, setting down the mice in front of them.

"I am, thank you." Blackpaw dipped his head and pulled his mouse towards him. Rabbitpaw looked uncertain for a moment, but gave a tiny nod and took a small bite of her mouse. Nightpaw sat down beside her, concern filling her heart. She was still torn apart over Timberpaw, Nightpaw wished she could do something to help but she couldn't bring back the dead. She could only help Rabbitpaw with her grieving process.

"How are all the sick cats doing?" Nightpaw questioned her brother, wanting to start a conversation instead of sitting in silence.

"There's not really anymore "sick" cats." Blackpaw replied. "Only a few with some lingering coughs like Rabbitpaw. Snakewhisker and Harewhisker still have a small cough as well, but that will go away in time. They're not in any danger."

"That's great to hear." Nightpaw purred. "We should be continuing the journey here soon, right?"

Blackpaw nodded. "Skyfeather and the other medicine cats want to leave in two days, we need to get moving." Nightpaw nodded along, turning to look at Rabbitpaw. She wasn't invested in this conversation, her green eyes were lost in thought.

"Nightpaw!" Nightpaw had been lost watching Rabbitpaw that she jumped when Wheatwhisker called her name. She looked over her shoulder at her mentor stood up as he approached her. "We're going on a quick patrol." He explained. "Let's hurry, it's nearly nighttime."

"Alright." Nightpaw stood up and bid farewell to Blackpaw and Rabbitpaw before following Wheatwhisker to the barn entrance. Along with them was Rootscratch, Ashfeather, Tallsong and Cinderflame were coming along.

"Ready?" Cinderflame asked, looking over the patrol. All the cats agreed and they set out. Nightpaw found a little odd that they were going on patrol like they were all from the same Clan. *It feels off, I never thought I'd be so comfortable around the other Clans.* Nightpaw shook away the thought and followed Cinderflame as she led the patrol away from the barn. The sun was slowly setting, Nightpaw hoped this wouldn't take too long, she feared they would meet a coyote.

The barn was surrounded by a vast field with thick brush surrounding its walls, thought Nightpaw could see a forest in the distance and the mountains were getting closer. She still felt drawn to those mountains, part of her really hoped they would be going towards them. The patrol walked around the far side of the barn, making sure to cover as much ground as they could.

As they neared the back of the barn, an incredibly foul stench filled the air. Nightpaw and the rest of the patrol stopped, Nightpaw had to stop herself from gagging at the smell. It smelled like crowfood. "What's that smell?" Tallsong asked, choking on the smell.

"We need to go back to the barn now." Cinderflame's voice was urgent. Nightpaw was confused for a moment, but then realization filled her mine. *They have a horrible scent that you'll be able to detect easily.* Harvey's words filled Nightpaw's mind, this was the scent of coyotes.

"Be quiet and don't move too quickly." Cinderflame and the patrol turned around, heading to the barn entrance. Nightpaw kept her pawsteps and breath as silent as she possibly could.

They walked around the edge of the barn, Nightpaw's heart was still in her chest. Her paws trembled as she walked. Behind Nightpaw, the brush rustled. A sharp cried pierce the air, the patrol whipped around to see that a large dog-like creature had jumped out of the brush and grabbed Ashfeather by her hind leg. At Ashfeather's cry, more of the coyotes had come out of the brush with teeth bared.

"Ashfeather!" Tallsong cried out and ran towards her Clanmate, but one of the coyote's moved faster. It jumped towards Tallsong and sank its teeth into her shoulder, blood spilling out around its teeth.

Cinderflame let out a yowl and lept onto the back of the coyote that held Tallsong, slashing at it's head and shoulders. The creature let out a cry and dropped Tallsong who dropped to the ground with a thud. "Run!" She yelled at the others. "Warn the Clans!"

Rootscratch, Wheatwhisker and Nightpaw all turned around, sprinting as fast as they could to the entrance to the barn. They turned the corner and ran into a large majority of warriors. "What's going on?" Riverstar demanded.

"Coyotes!" Was all Rootscratch needed to say and the warriors were running to the cries of distress. As they turned the corner again, Nightpaw saw Ashfeather lying limp on the ground, her eyes open yet lifeless. Blood welled from horrible wounds on her leg and belly. Nightpaw's heart twisted at the sight.

The warriors swarmed the coyotes but more of the creatures came out from the brush, yapping and snarling. Nightpaw slashed with extended claws at a coyote that ran by her, ripping open it's fur and flesh. The coyote turned on her and snapped, she could feel its hot breath on her face. Nightpaw ducked out of the way, hissing.

Ashblaze jumped on the coyote's back, sinking his claws and teeth into its spine. The coyote bucked Ashblaze off but the AshClan deputy landed with ease. Nightpaw slashed at its muzzle, causing blood to spray across her face.

A cry of pain cause Nightpaw to turn around, she saw Shadowstar against the barn wall. His yellow eyes were wide and filled with fear and pain, his throat had been torn open and bled heavily.

Nightpaw ran to the MoonClan's leader's side. He was breathing, but it was ragged and heavy. *He's going to lose a life!*

Nightpaw looked around for one of the medicine cats, hoping they had come to help. She spotted Pebblestep helping Seedclaw to his paws with a bloody shoulder. "Pebblestep! Shadowstar needs help!" She cried to the SunClan medicine cat. Pebblestep turned her attention to Nightpaw and Shadowstar. Her blue eyes went wide and the gray and white she-cat sprinted over to Shadowstar.

She instantly began looking over his wound. "I'm going to get back inside the barn." Pebblestep explained, letting Shadowstar fall against her. Nightpaw was amazed at the small medicine cat's strength as she held up a full grown tom cat who couldn't walk. Nightpaw made sure Pebblestep and Shadowstar were safe as the medicine cat took him into the barn. Once they were safe, Nightpaw ran back into the fight.

She found herself face to face with a coyote, it's muzzle coated in blood. It snapped at Nightpaw who quickly rolled out of the way, jumped to her paws and slashed at its nose. This coyote was much bigger than she was, with old scars lining its face and muzzle. Nightpaw dodged another bite and ran around its side, raking her claws across its side leaving deep welts in it's flesh.

Nightpaw felt a dull pain in her side as the coyote used its paw to throw her to the side. She hit the ground and the air rushed out of her lungs. Struggling to stand up, Nightpaw locked eyes with the coyote, its black eyes filled with rage and bloodlust.

There was a flash of golden brown tabby fur as a cat leapt onto the face of the coyote, stopping it from attacking Nightpaw. As she focused, Nightpaw realized that it was Falconpaw. The SunClan apprentice dropped off of the coyote and kicked up with his hind legs, spinning on his front paws. He then reared up, raking the coyote's face with his claws. He tucked his head and did a forward roll away to safety.

Nightpaw's jaw dropped, she had only seen that move one other place. *Thornstar taught me that move.* The coyote shook its head as blood covered its eyes before it ran into the brush away from the

fight. Nightpaw met Falconpaw's fierce amber gaze, his eyes were narrowed. She stood up, still holding his intense gaze. "Thanks." She said curtly. *This was the kit I attacked so long ago, I left that scar on his nose. He attacked me when he was barely six moons old and I couldn't do anything against him. This is not the kit I attacked back then, he's much more dangerous now.*

"Don't worry about it." With a flick of his tail, Falconpaw ran back into the fight. Nightpaw stared after him. *Is it possible that he's being trained by Thornstar too? I've never learned that move from Wheatwhisker and neither have my Clanmates.* Nightpaw shook her head, now wasn't the time to think. She had to keep fighting.

Nightpaw ran back into the battle, she spotted Petalshine fighting beside Timbertail. Both cats bled from different wounds but kept fighting. *What happens if Timbertail dies? He doesn't have nine lives.* Nightpaw didn't want to find out, she ran to the two of them and slashed at the back of the coyote's legs.

It turned around and snapped at Nightpaw, its teeth catching on Nightpaw's ears. She felt a searing pain as its sharp teeth ripped through the thin flesh of her ear. She let out a sharp hiss of pain and stumbled backwards. As she stepped backwards, she felt teeth sinking into her left hind leg. Suddenly, Nightpaw was lifted from the ground and upside down as the coyote behind her sank its teeth into her leg.

Nightpaw cried out for help, she saw Riverstar running towards her with wide blue eyes but the world zipped around Nightpaw as the coyote threw her. Nightpaw didn't have any time to react as her body it the side of the barn. Her head cracked against the hard wooden wall and darkness consumed her before her body hit the ground.

"I told you to give me space." Nightpaw's ears twitched. She heard a voice but it was muffled. "I'll let you know when Nightpaw is awake." Nightpaw focused harder, soon recognized the voice of Blackpaw. *What happened to me?* Nightpaw's mind was blurry, she felt a dull ache in her head as well as pain in her ear and hind leg. She tried to open her eyes and failed.

"Her ears twitched!" A sweet voice mewed, Nightpaw instantly recognized it as Rabbitpaw. "She's going to wake up soon!" There was a sigh from Blackpaw. Memories slowly flooded into Nightpaw's mind. She saw coyotes...Shadowstar dying...Ashfeather dead...Riverstar looked terrified...Nightpaw then recalled being thrown against the side of the barn.

Nightpaw's eyes finally opened, she winced at the early morning light. She lifted her heavy head, feeling dizzy and somewhat nauseous. She tried to speak but just let out a mumble, her throat and mouth were dry and had a foul taste.

"You're awake!" Suddenly Rabbitpaw was pressing her nose against Nightpaw's cheek. "I'm so glad you're awake."

"Me too." Nightpaw croaked.

"Let me check her please." Blackpaw grumbled and pushed Rabbitpaw away. Nightpaw looked up, meeting Blackpaw's blue eyes. "How are you feeling?"

"Thirsty." Nightpaw replied.

"I'll get you something to drink in just a moment. How does your head feel?"

"Like I have a headache."

Blackpaw nodded and turned away for just a moment and returned with a ball of snow wrapped in a leaf. "Drink from this." He instructed and set it down in front of Nightpaw. Nightpaw lapped at the snow, it was freezing cold and the most delicious water that Nightpaw had ever had. It soothed her parched mouth and throat.

When she was finished she used her paw to wipe the droplets of her chin. "Thank you." She dipped her head to Blackpaw. "How long have I been asleep?" Nightpaw questioned, finally feeling more coherent.

"About a day." Blackpaw replied, putting the snow away. "After you got knocked out, Riverstar carried you back out. It took awhile but we drove the coyotes away, but not without a heavy loss." His icy

blue eyes were sad.

"Who's hurt? Did any other cats die?" Rabbitpaw looked at her paws, flattening her ears. *There's something they don't want to tell me.* "What happened?" She demanded.

"Wheatwhisker died."

Nightpaw's heart dropped to her paws, a sense of numbness filled her entire body. "Wheatwhisker's...dead?" Her voice trembled.

"I'm so sorry, Nightpaw." Rabbitpaw rested her tail on Nightpaw's shoulders. "I know how much he meant to you."

"He was such an amazing mentor." Nightpaw dropped her head against her paws, she closed her eyes not wanting to open them and imagine a life without her mentor. *He's taught me so much, more than Thornstar ever could.* She flexed her claws. *I should've been there to protect him.* "Who else died?" Nightpaw questioned, her voice dry.

"Rootscratch, and Shadowstar lost two lives."

"*Two?*" Nightpaw looked up in bewilderment. "I didn't know a leader could lose more than one at a time."

Blackpaw nodded. "His wounds were incredibly severe, he lost the first life as soon as Pebblestep brought him back. We tried everything we could to stop the bleeding but not before he lost another life. We have it stopped now and he's under constant watch from Ravenheart and Oneflight."

Nightpaw stared at her paws. "I can't believe this happened..." She whimpered. "Everything was going so well for us...I knew coyotes would be bad but I didn't think they could do this to us."

"It's horrible, yes." Blackpaw's voice was dry, exhausted and pained. "We won't be able to travel for a long time, we need to recover. I just pray that those horrible creatures don't come back, I don't think we can handle any more death."

Chapter 13

"How does your shoulder feel?" Blackpaw questioned, giving Seedclaw's shoulder a sniff. The LichenClan warrior had taken a nasty bite but it was healing nicely thanks to herbs they had gotten from the twolegplace with the help of Harvey, Night, Juniper and a few other kittypets. Many cats had been wounded by the coyotes including Seedclaw, Tallsong, Cinderflame, Applespots, Brackenpelt, Petalshine, Riverstar, Flowerheart and Timbertail. They had spent nearly a half moon recovering from this attack and lost even more travel time.

The deaths of Rootscratch, Wheatwhisker and Ashfeather had really ruined the Clan's attitude towards the barn they had been staying in. Most cats were terrified to leave though the coyotes hadn't returned. Blackpaw and the other medicine cats worked tirelessly to help care for their Clanmates and help those who were grieving for lost loved ones. MoonClan's morale in particular was incredibly low, they had lost a beloved warrior and their Clan leader had lost two lives.

Violetfur had done an incredible job keeping MoonClan together, despite her own pain at losing her mother. Blackpaw admired the MoonClan deputy she was a very brave and noble cat, MoonClan was lucky to have her. As for AshClan, they were already small enough and now they had one less warrior. Wheatwhisker was a very kind and loving warrior, he loved Lilyclaw and all of their kits and was a wonderful mentor to Nightpaw. Blackpaw felt bad for both his own mentor and his sister, but they both kept working. Skyfeather stuck to his medicine cat duties and now that she was recovered, Nightpaw worked hard with hunting and keeping her Clanmates happy despite her loss.

Blackpaw wished he could do more for his sister, he wished he could sit down and talk with her to make sure that she was okay but he had been so busy with medicine cat duties that he barely got a moment to talk to her. *I just hope she's taking care of herself.*

Blackpaw wished, he knew that Rabbitpaw was helping her as Nightpaw helped her with the loss of Timberpaw. Timberpaw's death was one that Blackpaw couldn't shake from his conscience. He had argued with all the other medicine cats, he knew he should've stayed up with the apprentice, but Skyfeather told him to sleep and when the woke up, both Shorttail and Timberpaw were dead.

Despite what they all told him, Blackpaw blamed himself. He knew that he could've done something more and Timberpaw wouldn't have died. *None of these cats should've died.* Blackpaw's faith in StarClan was beginning to falter. *Why would they send us on such a dangerous journey and take so many cats from us?* He didn't want to think that, but he couldn't help.

"Blackpaw." Blackpaw looked up to see Skyfeather. His blue eyes were dull and exhausted. "Check on Riverstar, will you? I'm going to visit the twolegplace and get some marigold. I'll be back before dark, Oneflight is coming with me."

"Okay." Blackpaw just nodded, watching his mentor vanish out of the barn with Oneflight. Skyfeather looked so exhausted, Blackpaw just wished he would rest. However, he knew that arguing with his mentor was a waste of time. He just listened and padded over to Riverstar to check on her wound. It had been a deep bite mark on her belly, but last he checked it was healing nicely.

Riverstar was sitting near the back of the barn and Blackpaw was surprised to find her talking with Nightpaw. "Hi," Blackpaw greeted, somewhat awkwardly. "I'm here to check on your wounds."

"They don't hurt anymore," Riverstar explained. "Though you can check if you need to." Blackpaw did check her wound, it was closed and healing nicely. "Before you go, can I speak to the two of you?"

Blackpaw looked at Nightpaw who looked just as confused as he was. "Sure." Blackpaw sat down beside his sister and looked at his leader.

"I want to let you both know how proud of you I am. I feel like I haven't been as involved with you two as I should have been. You're

my niece and nephew, and you're all I have left of Echoheart." Blackpaw twitched his ears at the mention of his mother. He hadn't really thought about her since they left. *Does she know we left?* "When we were younger, Echoheart was such a sweet, loyal warrior. She was kind to every cat around her, but she was always easily influenced by those around her."

"She was?" Nightpaw tilted her head.

Riverstar nodded. "She never listened to her head, only her heart which was often misguided. When she was young warrior, she fell in love with a MoonClan warrior named Cedarheart. She nearly got herself killed because of it, and then later with Thornstar. He started talking to her across the border and convinced her to turn her back on AshClan which eventually led to the death of Moonwhisker." Riverstar looked at her paws. "I miss Echoheart every day, and I know you two didn't get to see much of her but I wished you could've met the old Echoheart."

"Do you think she knows we left?" Nightpaw asked, her voice low. "What if she tries to follow us?"

"I don't know how she would find us." Riverstar admitted.

"Would you ever let her back in the Clan?" Blackpaw asked, a question that had been clawing at the back of his mind. "If you think she had changed."

"I don't know." Riverstar sighed. "Part of me really wants to, but I don't know if I could ever look at her the same. She killed our sister and she clearly has it out for Dawnstar, I could never trust her in a battle against SunClan.

Blackpaw thought back to when Honeypaw told him about Echoheart's attack on SunClan. Echoheart had gone for Honeypaw directly and attacked Falconpaw earlier. *She wants revenge. If she ever lays a claw on Honeypaw again I'll attack her myself, I don't care that she's my mother. She never was a mother to me anyway.*

"Either way," Riverstar continued talking. "I just wanted to tell you two that I'm so proud of you and I'm honored to have you in my

Clan." Blackpaw felt genuinely touched by Riverstar's words. He had to remember that he wasn't just Echoheart's kin, he was Riverstar's and Moonwhisker's as well. *Moonwhisker was an incredible medicine cat, I hope I can be half as good as she was.* Blackpaw loved being a medicine cat, he wouldn't have been able to do that under Thornstar's rule. *I'm glad that Dawnstar killed him, she saved my Clan.* Once again Blackpaw's mind went to Honeypaw, she was the only cat who ever made him question his choice to be a medicine cat. *I love being a medicine cat, but that means I could never be with Honeypaw.* He found it harder and harder to fight his feelings for Honeypaw, and spending so much time with her during this journey hadn't made it any easier.

Her bright green eyes gave him hope and her voice silenced his fears. He wanted to find Clans' new home, but he also knew that he and Honeypaw would go back to living in separate territories.

"You there?" Blackpaw felt a paw prodding into his side, he shook away his thoughts on Honeypaw and focused on Nightpaw who was getting his attention.

"Yeah, sorry." He apologized. "Just thinking about a lot."

"Understandable." Nightpaw mewed. "How's everything going by the way? I feel like we haven't been able to talk very much lately with everything that's been going on."

"Stressful." Blackpaw admitted. "Skyfeather is working himself to death and I was finally relieved from all the sickness when we got attacked by coyotes. We've delayed getting to our new territory even longer and every cat is terrified of being killed by a coyote." He stopped his rambling, he hated ranting about his frustrations, especially to Nightpaw who had plenty of other things to worry about without her worrying if he was okay.

"Just stay hopeful." Nightpaw touched her nose to his cheek. "AshClan is lucky to have you and Skyfeather as medicine cats. We'll find our new home soon, this won't be the end of the Clans, I promise."

Chapter 14

Honeypaw looked over the wounds of Cinderflame and Applespots, they were almost fully healed and both she-cats were back to their normal selves. Most of the medicine cats with the exception of Honeypaw and Oneflight had gone out to find herbs in the twolegplace leaving the two of them to care for their Clanmates. Most of them had recovered from their wounds fully with the exception of Shadowstar who was still recovering from his fatal wound. As Honeypaw put away the herbs she a cry of pain sound through the barn making Honeypaw jump. She saw Oneflight keeling over Mosswind who was crying in pain.

"I think so." Mosswind panted.

Oneflight turned to Honeypaw. "The other medicine cats are out, you and I need to deliver these kits. Will you help me?" Honeypaw saw a sense of duty and courage in Oneflight's eyes. She nodded.

"I will, do we have any herbs for kitting here?" Honeypaw questioned the MoonClan medicine cat apprentice.

He nodded. "Pebblestep and Ravenheart have been gathering them in preparation for Cherryleaf and Mosswind. We should have chervil, ragwort and some raspberry leaves in the herb stock. Could you go get them?"

Honeypaw agreed and quickly ran across the barn to where the medicine cats had been staying. There was a small hole in the wall where they had been storing their herbs. Honeypaw sniffed around the leaves until she found the three herbs that Oneflight had told her about. She grabbed them, wrapped them in a large oak leaf and hurried back over to Oneflight, Mosswind and Swiftheart.

A lot of the Clans had gathered around as well, but Oneflight urged everyone to give them space. Swiftheart had found a stick for Mosswind to use as she gave birth to her kits. "Okay, Mosswind you're doing great." Oneflight assured her, giving the herbs that

Honeypaw brought a quick sniff. "Your kits will be here soon."

"They better be." Mosswind growled. "I can't take much more of this." She lashed her tail then let out another cry of pain. Honeypaw winced, but she knew this was all part of the process. She had only helped one queen give birth and it had been Goldenleaf on her first day of being an apprentice. Now she was helping a queen from another Clan, and she seemed a lot more sharp tempered than Goldenleaf had been.

Oneflight stayed by Mosswind's side, encouraging her while Swiftheart whispered soothing words to keep her calm. The tortoiseshell let out a piercing cry and a small bundle fell into the hay behind her. "Honeypaw, get that kit." Oneflight instructed and Honeypaw hurried to grab the small kit, licking its fur along it's spine. It didn't take long for the kit to start crying out, mewling for its mother. Honeypaw kept lapping at the kit's pale tortoiseshell fur and let Oneflight continue to help Mosswind.

It didn't take long for two more kits to be born. A speckled gray tom and a beautiful silver she-cat. Along with the kit Honeypaw had, all three were set at Mosswind's belly to nurse. They instantly took to their mother and starting nursing hungrily. Mosswind and Swiftheart watched their kits with pure love in their eyes.

"Do you have any names for them?" Oneflight asked, giving Mosswind some raspberry leaves.

"We do." Mosswind purred. "This is Shellkit, Minnowkit and Meadowkit." Mosswind motioned to the speckled tom, the silver she-cat and the tortoiseshell in turn.

"Wonderful names." Oneflight purred, looking down at the kits. "Welcome to MoonClan little warriors."

"Thank you, Oneflight." Mosswind wrapped her tail around her kits. "And thank you Honeypaw." Honeypaw met Mosswind's eyes. "Pebblestep has trained you well, you'll make a wonderful medicine cat."
"Thank you." Honeypaw dipped her head to the queen then let her rest with her kits. Soon after, the medicine cats returned and

Ravenheart rushed to meet his new Clanmates, praising both Honeypaw and Oneflight for helping Mosswind.

"Oneflight tells me you did a great job helping Mosswind have her kits." Pebblestep mewed, taking Honeypaw aside. "You're shaping up to be quite the medicine cat."

"It was nothing." Honeypaw replied, her pelt growing hot. She licked her chest sheepishly. "Mosswind needed help, and she had three healthy kits. That's really good considering everything that's happened lately."

"As I've said before, kits are always a good sign. We will have to delay our trip a little longer, but it will be worth it. These three kits will be a beacon of hope for the Clans. They may not have been born in the territories, but they were born surrounded by cats who love them."

Honeypaw took in Pebblestep's words closely. *This kits will be a beacon of hope. They will give us the love we need to keep going.* "I'm going to go sort some of the herbs we found, you should relax for a while."

"Alright." Honeypaw bid farewell to her mentor and tried to find something to do. She looked around for someone to talk to but couldn't find Falconpaw or Petalpaw. *They must be out.* Honeypaw caught movement towards her and spotted Blackpaw approaching her. She sat up straight and braced herself to talk to him. *I shouldn't be getting so worked up over him.*

"Hey," Blackpaw greeted awkwardly, eyes cast to the side.

"Hi." Honeypaw responded, trying to be slightly less awkward.

"So, I was wondering..." He cleared his throat. "Skyfeather wanted me to go search for burnet but he didn't want me to go alone, would you like to come with me?"

Honeypaw blinked, she hadn't expected this. They hadn't spent any time alone since they snuck out of their own camps to meet with each other. *But this isn't sneaking out, it's just two medicine cats looking*

for herbs. Honeypaw didn't want to think about it too much. "Sure." Was all she said and the two set off out of the barn.

As they stepped outside, Honeypaw sniffed the air. She couldn't scent any coyotes which gave her a sense of relief. "Come on," Blackpaw stepped farther into the snow. Roseheart said she saw some burnet farther out in the field." Honeypaw followed Blackpaw, the two of them walked side by side out into the vast field. Honeypaw wondered what this place looked like when it wasn't covered in snow. *I bet it's lovely.* As they walked, Honeypaw kept her nose in the air, searching for any scents of danger.

"How is Mosswind doing? How are her kits?" Blackpaw asked while they walked, keeping his eyes ahead of them.

"Good, she named them Meadowkit, Minnowkit and Shellkit. They're all strong and healthy." Honeypaw explained.

"That's good." Blackpaw flicked his ears. "Hopefully we can keep them that way, they're in no position to travel." He let out a tiny sigh. "It seems like our new home is moons away."

Honeypaw looked at the ground, she couldn't help but agree with him. "It does." She mewed quietly. "But we'll get there, I know we will. StarClan will help us."

"How do you have so much faith?" Blackpaw finally looked at her, doubt casting over his eyes. "StarClan doesn't seem like they're helping us much. We've lost seven cats since we started this journey, how many do we have to sacrifice for our new home?"

Honeypaw stopped walking, staring at her paws. She closed her eyes, picturing her Clanmates in her head. *So many have died.* Honeypaw knew this was true. *But somehow I can't see the Clans failing.* "We have to put our faith in something. Whether it's StarClan or the cats around us, we *will* find our new home. It will be beautiful and provide a new home for Mosswind's kits, Cherryleaf's future kits and every single kit born once we get there. We will become full medicine cats there and we will find our destinies there." Honeypaw looked up at the sky, it was pale blue and speckled with wispy clouds. "I just know it."

"What *is* our destiny." Honeypaw looked down, locking eyes with Blackpaw. "What's my destiny? I'm the son of Echoheart, when my Clanmates look at me and my sister they see *her*. Not me. You're the daughter of Dawnstar, kin to Honeywing."

Honeypaw held his gaze, was this really how he was treated? "You forget, I'm also the kin of Thornstar and you're the kin of Riverstar and Moonwhisker, but even that doesn't matter. You're not Echoheart, Moonwhisker or Riverstar. You're *Blackpaw,* and that's the only cat you need to be."

Blackpaw looked away, staring at the snow. "How do I be anything more than what my Clanmates have made me out to be?"

Honeypaw stepped closer to Blackpaw, wrapping her tail around his shoulders. "You show them that you're not what they've made you. You have your own path and destiny to follow, it's your life to chose." Blackpaw looked up, his muzzle was barely a mouselength away from Honeypaw, her pelt started burning despite the chilled air.

"My life to chose." Blackpaw repeated, his breath billowing out in a cloud in front of him. "I-"

"Hope I'm not interrupting." A strange voice made Honeypaw jump. She and Blackpaw's head snapped towards where the voice came from. Before them stood a group of unfamiliar cats, their claws extended and malice shimmering in their eyes. Honeypaw took a step back and the fur on Blackpaw's spine stood up.

"Who are you?" Blackpaw demanded, unsheathing his claws.

"My name is Hornet." The original cat who spoke stepped forward, he was a golden brown tabby with black stripes. The cats around him stepped closer to the two apprentices. "And you cats clearly don't know how to take a hint."

"What are you talking about?" Blackpaw questioned, lashing his tail.

"You big group of cats move in on our territory and think you can get away with it? I thought leading those coyotes to the barn would

have driven you out for sure, and yet here you are."

"*You* lead those coyotes to us?" Honeypaw stepped forward, finally finding her voice. "Why would you do that."

"I just explained why." Hornet growled. "You encroaching on our territory and it's time for you to leave."

"We have injured cats thanks to you, we can't travel and we have newborn kits to care for." Blackpaw snarled.

"That's far from my problem." Hornet flicked his ear. The cats around him began circling Honeypaw and Blackpaw. Fear filled Honeypaw's chest, she backed up and pressed against Blackpaw. "Clearly we have to take more...*extreme* measures." He flicked his tail and the cats jumped in to attack Blackpaw and Honeypaw.

"Run!" Blackpaw shouted to her and they broke into a sprint away from the rogues. Honeypaw didn't make it very far before she was tackled to the ground by a gray and white tom. She felt claws piercing her skin and teeth biting into her shoulder. "Honeypaw!" Blackpaw cried and ran to help her only to be shoved to the ground by a black she-cat.

The gray and white tom dragged Honeypaw away from Blackpaw, she clawed and struggled only to have his teeth bite deeper into her shoulder. She cried out and called for Blackpaw.

"Blackpaw, right?" Hornet stepped between Honeypaw and Blackpaw. "Run, go tell your friends that I have their precious Honeypaw. If you leave *tonight* I'll give her back. If you hesitate or try and fight back I will kill her." Honeypaw locked eyes with Blackpaw, her heart pounding in her chest. Her entire body trembled with fear. *This can't be happening.* "Meet back here at moonhigh with your answer. Remember, anything other than leaving..." Hornet suddenly turned on Honeypaw, throwing her to the ground on her back. He placed his paw with claws extended over her throat.

Honeypaw trembled under his force, her mind couldn't focus. *He's going to kill me.* Was all Honeypaw could think on. "Run along now,

wouldn't want to waste any time." Honeypaw closed her eyes, she could hear Blackpaw running through the sun. "Come on, let me introduce you to the rest of my *friends*."

Honeypaw was forced to her paws and walked beside Hornet. Her entire body shook and she could barely walk. *Please hurry, Blackpaw.*

Chapter 15

Blackpaw ran as fast as he could back to the barn. He couldn't shake the horrible look in Hornet's eyes and the look of pure terror on Honeypaw's face. *I couldn't protect her.* Blackpaw ran faster. *I'm useless.* The barn soon came into view and Blackpaw pushed himself to run faster despite his burning lungs. He reached the entrance and pushed his way inside. *I need to tell Dawnstar first.* He spotted Dawnstar talking with Lionclaw, Cinderflame and Turtleblaze near the center of the barn.

Blackpaw ran over to her. "Dawnstar!" He cried out, getting her attention immediately. Dawnstar stood up, looking at Blackpaw with concern in her green eyes.

"Blackpaw? What's wrong?"

"I was out getting herbs with Honeypaw when this group of rogues showed up," Dawnstar's ears flattened. "Their leader, Hornet, said that they led the coyotes to us to try and drive us out and since it didn't work they took Honeypaw and saying that if we don't leave they'll kill her."

"*What?"* Lionclaw stood, amber eyes blazing and his claws unsheathed against the wood floor of the barn. "Where are they?"

"He said to meet at the place where he took her at moonhigh. He said if we didn't leave or if we tried to fight he would kill Honeypaw."

"I'd like to see him try." Lionclaw growled. "I'll tear him apart!"

"Blackpaw go get Riverstar and Timbertail, we need to discuss this but I'm not letting my daughter die!" Blackpaw didn't hesitate, he found Riverstar with Ashblaze and Timbertail with Larkclaw.

"Honeypaw was taken by rouges demanding that we leave or they'll kill her." Riverstar's eyes went wide as Blackpaw explained what

was going on, Blackpaw himself couldn't calm his racing heartbeat. *How could I let this happen?* "Dawnstar wants to talk with the leaders."

Blackpaw followed Riverstar, Timbertail and their deputies back to Dawnstar. On the way they brought Violetfur along as well. The rest of the Clans had figured out that something was up and were watching the leaders. "How many cats were there, Blackpaw?" Riverstar questioned.

"A lot, but I bet there's more." Blackpaw explained, trying to keep his voice from shaking. "He said we were on their territory and they wanted us out. That's why they brought the coyotes."

"We can't leave." Violetfur argued. "Mosswind's kits will die in the cold!"

"We can't just let them kill Honeypaw!" Pebblestep spoke up from the crowd.

"Honeypaw is your daughter, Dawnstar." Timbertail spoke up over the arguing. "What do you think we should do?"

"We can't leave." Dawnstar said, her voice quiet and cold. There was a genuine rage in her eyes, Blackpaw didn't think he had ever seen Dawnstar look this angry before. "But I refuse to let my daughter be killed by some flea-bitten rogue. I say we fight them."

"Hornet said that if we'd fight he'd kill her." Blackpaw told her, fearing even more Honeypaw's life.

"He won't be able to." Dawnstar lashed her tail. "I won't let him. Honeypaw is my daughter, I won't let her die."

"Is fighting a good idea?" Roseheart mewed from the sidelines. "We're still recovering from the coyotes."

"If you don't want to risk any of your warriors, I understand." Dawnstar closed her eyes. "But SunClan will be fighting these rogues, there's not a single warrior in my Clan who wouldn't give everything to protect Honeypaw."

"No, Dawnstar." Blackpaw watched his leader step forward. "You will not be fighting this alone, AshClan will be joining you. Honeypaw has helped the Clans just as much as the other medicine cats. During this journey we are not four Clans, but one." Riverstar met Dawnstar's gaze, they shared a look of respect.

"MoonClan will be joining as well." Blackpaw heard the deep, raspy voice of Shadowstar. They turned to see him on his paws standing a few taillengths away. "I will be unable to fight, but Honeypaw helped bring three MoonClan kits into the world today, she deserves to be saved."

"LichenClan will help as well." Timbertail added. "Surely they don't have enough cats to match four Clans, even if we spare some of our warriors that are injured. We will show these rogues what happens when you challenge the four Clans."

Blackpaw looked at the four leaders, feeling inspired. Part of him wished he could really fight, he wished he could show Hornet the anger he felt inside. *He hurt Honeypaw and he deserves to feel the same fear that she's feeling right now.* Blackpaw lashed his tail. *But I'm just a medicine cat. I need to heal my Clanmates, so they can go get Honeypaw.*

A cat pushed past Blackpaw, he regained his balance to see that it was Falconpaw who had stormed past. Blackpaw glared at the golden brown tabby, but relaxed as he realized the rage he must be feeling. *Honeypaw is his sister, I would feel the same if it was Nightpaw who had gotten taken.*

"When are we going to fight?" Falconpaw demanded, staring at his parents with fierce amber eyes.

"I don't know if I want you fighting, Falconpaw." Dawnstar admitted, her voice stern.

"Excuse me?" Falconpaw flattened his ears. "There's no way you're keeping me from this fight. Honeypaw is my sister! I'd die protecting her and you know it. If you don't let me fight I'm just going to follow you anyway, you know that right?"

Dawnstar sighed. "I don't want both of my kits in danger."

"Mother, I'm not a kit anymore." Falconpaw growled. "I'm almost a warrior and it's my duty as a member of this Clan to protect my Clanmates and I *will* protect them, even if I die trying. That's the oath all warriors take."

Dawnstar closed her eyes, thinking for a moment. "Very well, Falconpaw. You can fight. We will attack them tonight, our main goal is to get Honeypaw away from them before she can get seriously hurt."

Blackpaw turned away, leaving the leader's to discuss their more in depth plan that he wouldn't be apart of. He heard pawsteps beside him and looked up to see Nightpaw padding up to him. "I can't believe that happened." Nightpaw mewed. "I'm so glad they didn't take you." She stood close, nuzzling his cheek.

"I wish they would've." Blackpaw sighed, staring at his paws.

"What?" Nightpaw stepped back. "Why?"

"Because Honeypaw didn't deserve to be taken." Blackpaw replied sharply. "

"You don't deserve it either," Nightpaw flattened her ears slightly. "We'll get Honeypaw back, why are you so worried about her anyway? I understand she's a medicine cat too but--"

"She's my friend, Nightpaw!" Blackpaw snapped without control, Nightpaw jumped back slightly. "Imagine if Rabbitpaw had been taken from right beside you and you couldn't do anything to help her. How would that make you feel?"

Nightpaw's eyes widened slightly and she took another step back. "I'm sorry, Blackpaw, I didn't know."

Blackpaw turned away, he felt slightly guilty for yelling at Nightpaw but his mind had been so filled with fear and worry for Honeypaw that part of him didn't really care. *I won't be happy until Honeypaw is back home and safe. No matter what it takes.*

Chapter 16

Hornet shoved Honeypaw forward, causing her to nearly trip over her own paws. They were approaching what looked like a camp sheltered in the woods. It smelled of crowfood and the cats who lived there were hauntingly thin. Their ribcages poked out through their dull, matted pelts. Their eyes were sharp and glowed with hatred and malice as Honeypaw was forced into their camp.

"Hornet," A voice spoke from a den towards the back of the camp. Out of the den stepped a ginger she-cat with fierce green eyes. Her chest and paws were slightly lighter than the rest of her pelt. "What is this?" She questioned, resting her eyes on Honeypaw. They didn't show the same anger as the rest of the rogues here, instead they were filled with confusion.

"I told you I was going to deal with those cats. The coyotes didn't run them out so we're forcing them to leave by taking this cat as a hostage. If they don't leave by tonight we kill her." Honeypaw flattened her ears, feeling Hornet's toxic gaze boring into her back. The ginger she-cat's eyes widened slightly.

"Hornet..." Her voice was uncertain. "May I talk to you?" Hornet narrowed his eyes but gave a small nod.

"Very well." Hornet turned to the cats behind him. "Adder, Jade. Take her to her new den. I'll be with her shortly."

"Let's go." The gray and white tom, Adder, pushed Honeypaw forwards. Feeling her chest tighten even more, Honeypaw followed without complaint or resistance. *There's no use fighting.* As they walked across camp, Honeypaw's mind travelled to the Clans. *If we leave tonight there's no way Mosswind's kits would survive. But if we don't leave, then Hornet will kill me.* Honeypaw didn't want to die, but she also didn't want the three kits to die. *Plus there's Shadowstar...he's in no condition to travel.*

She looked around the camp, there weren't many rogues here. They

were bigger than AshClan, but much smaller than SunClan. *If the Clans attacked, then the rogues would easily lose.* Honeypaw looked at her paws. *I know for a fact that they will fight, but if they do then there's nothing stopping Hornet from killing me.* She let out a quiet sigh. *I'd rather me die then put every other Clan cat at risk. I'll sacrifice myself if I have to.*

"In there." Adder and Jade stopped at a very tiny den made out of a twisted bramble thicket. "There will be constant guards outside so don't try anything." With another prod, Adder forced Honeypaw into the den. It didn't have any moss and it was incredibly small. The brambles poked at Honeypaw but she grit her teeth and dealt with it.

She curled up in the back of the nest, watching Adder and Jade sit outside. She flattened her ears and buried her nose in her tail. She just wanted to be back with her family. She was so scared, scared of dying and scared of causing the deaths of her Clanmates. She thought of Blackpaw, he had looked scared as well. *He tried to protect me. I hope he's okay.*

Honeypaw stayed in the den, each time she closed her eyes she hoped she would wake up and find herself back in the barn, back with her Clanmates. However, she was still in a strange camp filled with cats who wanted to kill her.

Pawsteps approached the den and Honeypaw's fur stood on end. She lifted her head and saw the malicious amber eyes of Hornet peer through the entrance. "How are you doing my little prisoner?" Honeypaw flattened her ears, pressing herself against the back of the den. Brambles dug into her skin but she wanted to be as far away from Hornet as she possibly could be. "Don't be scared." Hornet's voice had a fake calm to it, it only made her more terrified. "You have nothing to be afraid of as long as your friends leave." He stepped into the den, only mouselengths away from Honeypaw.

"If they chose to stay then..." His claws unsheathed, glinting in the pale light. "*Then* you have something to worry about." He sat down, putting his claws away. "So tell me, what exactly *are* you? Honeypaw is kind of a silly name don't you think?" Honeypaw stayed silent. "Either answer me or you'll be leaving here with more

than a few scars."

Honeypaw swallowed the knot of fear that stuck in her throat. "I-I'm a Clan cat...I'm the medicine cat apprentice."

"A *Clan* cat?" Hornet rolled his eyes. "What exactly is a Clan."

"There's four Clans...mine is SunClan. We used to live in a forest but it began to die so...we-we had to find a new home. That's why we were staying in the barn...we had sick cats to care for."

"So to care for your own cats you steal from mine?" Hornet narrowed his eyes. "That's pretty selfish, no?"

"We d-didn't know you lived around here...if you would've told us we could've worked something out--"

Hornet jumped up, his claws scraping into the floor of the den. "Why should *we* have to give up *our* food for some stupid Clans! It's not my problem that you lost your home or that you had sick cats! When a cat gets sick out here we let it die! Why bother caring for them, it's only a burden and a waste of prey! We don't have fancy medicine cats!" Hornet got in Honeypaw's face, she let out a squeak of fear and pressed herself to the ground.

She could feel his breath on her fur, she closed her eyes and trembled beneath him. She could see the murder in his eyes, he wanted to shred her and there was nothing she could do to stop him.

"Clan cats must be pretty weak if you're scared so easily." Hornet chuckled. "We'll see what happens tonight, I hope your Clans are smart.. I'd hate to see such a pretty she-cat die." Honeypaw kept her eyes squeezed shut as she heard Hornet turn and leave. It took several moments for Honeypaw to find the courage to open her eyes. She feared that when she did, she would see the sharp, terrifying eyes of Hornet.

Finally, Honeypaw opened her eyes and was relieved to find herself alone. She curled up once more, her heart still racing and her body trembling. *What an awful cat.* Honeypaw thought, wondering how

such a cat could live. *He's no better than Thornstar.*

Honeypaw laid in the den, watching the sun slowly fall between the gaps of her den. *It's nearly time.* She thought. *I wonder what's going to happen.* Whether the Clans leaved or stayed, Honeypaw feared the absolute worst.

More pawsteps approached her den, Honeypaw's heart twisted into a knot. She braced herself to see Hornet once more, but instead a small figure poked its head through the den entrance. It was a ginger she-cat with darker splotches on her fur and some tabby markings. Her eyes were a pale gentle green. They weren't malicious or angered, they were calm and worried. "Hello there."

"Hi?" Honeypaw said quietly and confused.

"I just wanted to check on you." The she-cat stepped in. "I'm sorry you're here right now I wish my father didn't bring you here."
"Your father..." Honeypaw's fur stood on end.

"Yeah," The she-cat sighed. "Hornet is my father, but I promise I'm not here to hurt you. I don't want to hurt you or see you get hurt. Neither does my mother."

"Who's your mother?" Honeypaw tilted her head.

"Her name is Garnet, she's a ginger she-cat like me, but with lighter paws." Honeypaw recalled the she-cat she had seen when she first got here. *She didn't look angry either.* "My name is Primrose, what's yours?"

"Honeypaw." Despite the fear that had been consuming her since she got here, Honeypaw felt calmed by this cat.

"That's an odd name, where are you from? Are you a kittypet?"

Honeypaw shook her head. "I'm from SunClan, we used to live in a forest but it started dying so we had to find a new home. That's why we are even here, we would've left after our sick cats had recovered but then your father..." Her voice trailed off.

"I'm sorry." Primrose looked at her paws. "I wish my father didn't

lead those coyotes to you, were a lot of you hurt?"

Honeypaw nodded. "Three cats died and a lot more were injured. That stopped us from travelling and then one of our queens just had three kits today. We still have one cat that is badly injured and those kits won't be able to travel for a while. If the Clans agree to leave then I don't think those kits will survive but if we stay then I--" She stopped herself. Primrose's eyes filled with sadness. "To be honest, I hope they stay. Even if Hornet kills me, I'd rather the loss of my life then three newborn kits."

"That--"

"Primrose!" A sharp mew cut through the air.

"Sorry, I have to go." Primrose stood up. "I'm so sorry this is happening to you, I hope you and your Clan can get away from this safely." With that, Primrose turned and ran out of the den. In the distance, Honeypaw could hear her and Hornet talking.

"What were you doing in there?" Hornet demanded, his voice as sharp as his claws.

"I was just checking on her. She's scared." Primrose's voice was timid and quiet. She was scared of her own father. Honeypaw couldn't imagine how that felt, everything Honeypaw looked at Lionclaw she saw nothing but love, hope and protection.

"As well she should be." Hornet snarled. "Her fears are none of your concern. Go to the den with your mother and don't come out until I return. It's time for the Clans to make their decision."

Chapter 17

Falconpaw flexed his claws into the wood beneath his paws. He itched to rip into the pelt of the cat that had taken his sister hostage. *Whoever this Hornet cat is...he better hope I don't get my claws in him.* Anger coursed through Falconpaw's blood, how dare this mange pelt take his sister from him? *I'll show him what happens when you mess with SunClan.* Falconpaw was pacing, it was nearly time for them to meet with Hornet and tell him if they were leaving or staying. *Not only are we staying, but we're taking Honeypaw back as well.*

A large majority of the Clans had decided to fight with the exception of the previously injured cats and the medicine cats. *I don't think Hornet knows what he's messing with.* Falconpaw looked around the barn, a lot of cats were prepared to fight. Even though Honeypaw wasn't in their Clan, they were also fighting for their right to stay here. To let their injured cats recover, and to let Mosswind's newly born kits find their strength.

Hornet drug those disgusting coyotes here. He deserves the same fate that Ashfeather, Rootscratch and Wheatwhisker faced. Falconpaw lashed his tail and sat down, trying to sit still for just a few moments. Movement caught his eye as Dawnstar and Lionclaw approached him.

"Can we talk to you for a moment?" Dawnstar questioned, looking down at her son with concern in her green eyes.

Falconpaw nodded, feared this was going to be them telling him not to fight again. "Yeah, what is it?"

"We know you must be upset about your sister being taken," Lionclaw began. "We both are as well. You and your sister mean more to us than anything else."

"What's this about?" Falconpaw narrowed his eyes.

"Nothing, Falconpaw." Dawnstar shook her head slightly. "I just wanted to tell you I'm sorry for telling you that you shouldn't fight. You're almost a warrior and you have every right to fight for your sister as we do. I was just distressed over what had happened with Honeypaw. I will be proud to fight with both my mate and my son to protect my daughter. When Cherryleaf, Briarrose and Thrushclaw had been taken by Thornstar I snuck into AshClan camp to take them back because I saw how much pain Applespots was in. I've seen the pain that Squirreltail has felt from losing Pikepaw and Sorrelpaw and it's not something I ever want to feel for myself.

"I'd lose all nine of my lives before I let anything happen to you or your sister. You two are my world and I won't let anything happen to either of you. Honeypaw is in danger but we *will* get her back, no matter what."

Falconpaw felt a strong sense of pride swelling inside of his chest. He looked at his father, an incredibly brave and powerful warrior. Fierce in battle and a skillful hunter, loyal to his Clan and dedicated to serving his Clanmates. Then he looked at his mother, a courageous, intelligent and wise leader. She defeated Thornstar who threatened to destroy the Clans. *My parents are incredibly strong cats.* Falconpaw realized. *And I will be as strong as they are. I will protect my sister.*

"I know we will." Falconpaw replied. "I know that I wasn't very nice to Honeypaw when we first became apprentices. I was stupid and arrogant, but I know different now. Honeypaw is my sister and I'll do anything I can to protect her. I promise."

"I know you will." Dawnstar touched her muzzle to Falconpaw's forehead. "We will get her back." Dawnstar took a step back and glanced out the entrance of the barn at the darkening sky. The sun was in it's final moments and the sun was getting ready to take its place. "It's nearly time." Dawnstar mewed. "We will meet with Hornet at moonhigh, but we won't waste any time."

The wait for night time felt like it would kill Falconpaw, every second that passed he feared for his sister. He worried that Hornet would be hurting her or torturing her. He feared that when they found her it would be too late. *I can't think like that.* Falconpaw

shook the thought away. *Fear weighs down your paws.* Falconpaw found himself thinking back to Falconclaw's lessons. He missed training with his mentor, he missed the constant fighting and intense training.

The coyote attack had given him that sense of battle, but part of him felt so helpless against the creatures. They could kill a cat in a single bite, and though Falconpaw made it out nearly unschathed others hadn't. *It was an unfair fight.* Falconpaw thought. *And we still drove them away. Hornet made it an unfair fight for us against the coyotes, so we'll make it an unfair fight for him against the Clans.*

The time had finally come, Falconpaw walked beside his mother and father at the head of the Clans. His head was held high and he walked with confidence, his claws itching to rip into the pelt of Hornet. Blackpaw had told them where the meeting place was and he and the other medicine cats would be waiting nearby in case of any serious injuries.

Falconpaw and the Clans approached the meeting area and he could already scent the rogues. With each step closer to them Falconpaw's heart raced faster and faster. He was desperate for this fight, to show them what would happen because of them taking Honeypaw.

As they climbed the small hill, Falconpaw made out shapes at the top. As they grew closer Falconpaw spotted the cat he assumed was Hornet. It was a tabby with golden and dark stripes across his pelt. His amber eyes filled with malice as he looked over the approaching cats. He could make out a few more, a group of about ten. *We win based on sheer numbers. They don't stand a chance.* But Falconpaw saw no sign of Honeypaw.

"Greetings." Hornet welcomed them with a fake kindness. Falconpaw wanted to claw the smug look off of his face.

"Are you Hornet?" Dawnstar demanded, curling her lip as she spoke.

"I am, and you are?"

"My name is Dawnstar, leader of SunClan. You have my daughter."

"Oh little Honeypaw is your daughter is she?" Hornet chuckled. "How wonderful that I took a leader's daughter."

"You'll give her back if you know what's good for you and your cats." Dawnstar growled, lashing her tail.

"Oh I'll give her back, if you leave. Take all of your cats and leave this territory, never to return. If you don't leave then I'll kill her."

"You won't lay a claw on her!" Lionclaw shouted. "We're not leaving and we're taking her back!"

"Is that so?" Hornet bared his teeth. "I don't recall that being an option. If you fight I'll just kill her anyway."

"She's not here," Riverstar stepped forward. "You'd have to run to where she is and we'll just follow you and fight you there."

"We have many more cats than you do." Violetfur pointed out. "We have the force of four Clans of warriors, you have a few scrawny rogues."

"Are you sure about that? I have cats all around here. If you attack, then you'll soon be overwhelmed and my rogues are trained to kill without remorse."

"I guess we'll have to see, then." Dawnstar sneered, her voice bleeding confidence. Falconpaw was a little surprised. His mother was normally peaceful and calm, but now she seemed cocky and aggressive. *I guess you really don't want to mess with a mother's kits.* "Clans! Attack!"

At Dawnstar's command, the Clans rushed forward over the rogues. Falconpaw unsheathed his claws and charged forward. For a brief moment Falconpaw saw a flash of alarm in Hornet's eyes before he was hidden by his group of rogues. The rogues were quickly overwhelmed by the Clan cats and despite what Hornet had said, no other cats were coming to aid them.

Falconpaw's eyes scanned the crowd for Hornet but saw no sign of him. Movement in the distance caught his eye as he saw Hornet's golden pelt running towards the woods. *He's running away! He's*

running to Honeypaw! "Hornet is getting away!" Falconpaw called, getting Dawnstar's attention. "We have to follow him!"

Without waiting for her to follow, Falconpaw broke into a dead sprint across the snowy field, kicking up a flurry of snow as he did so. His blood roared in his ears, he kept his eyes purely focused on Hornet. *I'm not letting you out of my sight you flea-pelt!* Falconpaw could hear many more warriors following behind him. *Hornet is such a mouse-brain, he's leading us right to his camp!*

It wasn't long before a small, ragged looking camp came into view. There was only about four more cats in this camp. As the warriors swarmed it, Falconpaw spotted Hornet running towards a small den in the back of the camp. As he reached it, Falconpaw heard a high pitched cry. *Honeypaw!* Falconpaw ran forwards only to be knocked to the ground by a gray and white tom.

Falconpaw let out a cry of anger and ripped into the tom's pelt. He bit down, tasting the blood of the cat who attacked him. The tom cried out in pain and ripped himself away from Falconpaw's grip. He didn't have time to chase, he had to save Honeypaw.

Many cats had rushed towards Hornet and Honeypaw, but one cat had reached them first. Falconpaw recognized the cat as Flamewhisker from LichenClan. Her fiery pelt was a blur against the snow as she attacked Hornet.

Honeypaw watched, trapped inside the den and Falconpaw could see horror in green eyes. Flamewhisker jumped onto Hornet's back, clawing at his shoulders. Hornet let out a howl of pain and threw Flamewhisker onto the ground, she landed hard on her back and was clearly winded.

In a split second, Hornet lashed out with his claws and raked them across Flamewhisker's throat. The ginger she-cat let out a cry of pain, her green eyes filling with pain. Falconpaw let yowled with anger and ran faster towards them. He made it across the camp in a few short bounds.

He was nearly to Hornet as the rogue grabbed Honeypaw by the scruff of her neck and threw her onto the ground. "Looks like your

mother made her choice!" Hornet raised his paw, claws glinting in the moonlight.

With one final leap, Falconpaw collided with Hornet, knocking the rogue to the ground. He and Falconpaw rolled through the snow and Falconpaw buried his claws deep into Hornet's flesh. "You dare mess with the Clans! You try and kill my sister!" Falconpaw jumped off Hornet only to turn around slash up, raking his claws across Hornet's face.

"You Clan cats are pathetic!" Hornet spat, his blood staining the snow crimson. "You'll die just as easily as she did!" He motioned to Flamewhisker. "What a pathetic waste of space! Just like your *sister!*"

Anger exploded inside of Falconpaw like a fire, his vision became a blood red haze. With claws fully extended Falconpaw tackled Hornet to the ground. He swiped with his paw, his claws ripping through the flesh on Hornet's belly. Falconpaw could feel the rogues blood hot on his pelt. His anger still burned brightly, this cat deserved to suffer!

Kill him, Falconpaw. A familiar, chilling voice spoke inside of Falconpaw's mind. *Falconclaw.* With a yowl, Falconpaw sank his teeth into Hornet's throat. Beneath him, Hornet's body jerked and he let out a cry, only to have it but cut off by a sharp intake of breath. Falconpaw kept his teeth fastened in Hornet's throat until he stopped moving.

The red haze faded and Falconpaw was able to focus on the world around him again. His body suddenly became sore and he felt exhaustion weighing on his shoulders like he hadn't felt before. He stepped back off of Hornet's body, stumbling to the ground. His breathing was sharp and heavy. *What happened to me?* Falconpaw questioned.

"Falconpaw!" Falconpaw blinked back into focus once more, turning to look at Honeypaw who was running to his side. She rubbed up against him, nuzzling his pelt. "Thank you! You saved me!" She cried, burying her nose in his fur. "I've never been happier to see you." Falconpaw pressed against his sister, his body felt numb and

cold and she provided a sense of warmth and security.

Falconpaw felt somewhat unnerved what the surge of anger that had taken over him. He looked at Honeypaw, making sure she was safe and unharmed. "Did he hurt you?" Falconpaw asked, shocked at how shaky his voice was.

Honeypaw shook her head. "No he didn't, thanks to you." She looked around. "All four Clans are here." She mewed. The fight had already come to a stop, most of the rogues had run into the woods, the only thing that remaind was the body of a ginger rogue and the body of Flamewhisker.

"My-my mother." Falconpaw's ear twitched as he heard a small, horrified voice. He turned towards a large den near he and Honeypaw and saw a smaller ginger she-cat standing in the entrance. "Sh-she's dead."

"Primrose." Honeypaw left Falconpaw's side and trotted up to the she-cat. "Primrose I-I'm so sorry, I didn't want your mother to die."

The ginger rogue, Primrose, dropped her head. The Clans had turned to look at her as well. "I know you didn't. It's not your fault, it's *his*." Primrose looked towards the body of Hornet. "*He* started this fight, he knew that we would never be able to fight you. He didn't have to do this!"

"Who are you?" Falconpaw looked towards the Clans and saw Lilyclaw approaching the rogue.

"I'm Primrose. Hornet was my father and my mother was Garnet. Both of them are dead now. One of you may have killed my mother, but only because of a fight that my father caused." Falconpaw felt a twinge of sympathy for the young rogue. *She doesn't seem like Hornet at all.*

"Primrose," Riverstar stepped forward, standing beside Lilyclaw. "Would you like to come with us?" Gasps spread throughout the Clans, Falconpaw's jaw dropped.

"Riverstar what are you doing?" Ashblaze stood in beside his leader.

"Why are you inviting a rogue to stay with us?"

"Because, Ashblaze. I see something inside of her and she has no one else. If you wish to come with us, Primrose, you're welcome to. If the other Clans don't agree then you will be under the watch of AshClan."

"A-Are you serious?" Primrose tilted her head.

"I am." Riverstar nodded. "I don't want to leave a young cat like you all alone, you need the support of others. Will you come with us?"

"I-I will." Primrose approached Riverstar. A lot of the other Clan cats looked uncertain but Falconpaw caught the eye of Dawnstar. She looked at him and Honeypaw and gave a loving gaze and a nod of approval.

"Then," Dawnstar spoke up. "It's time to go home," She rested her green eyes on Primrose. "All of us."

Chapter 18

"You're doing great, Cherryleaf! They're almost here." Pebblestep encouraged the queen while Cloudspots whispered comforting words to his mate. Falconpaw watched from a short distance away, he wanted to make sure that his mentor was okay. There hadn't been much training between them lately, but she would always be Falconpaw's mentor. He watched as Cherryleaf let out an ear splitting cry, making Falconpaw wince. *Is that what she-cats have to go through to have kits?* Falconpaw was suddenly grateful he would never have to do that.

"There's one here!" Falconpaw perked up his ears, seeing Honeypaw pick up a small bundle of white fur and began lapping at its fur. "Great job, Cherryleaf there's another one coming. After a few moments another kit was born, a small gray kit. After a long wait, the final kit was born. Falconpaw watched as all three kits were placed at their mother's belly.

Falconpaw watched Cherryleaf with her kits, nuzzling each of them and watching them with pure love in her eyes. Cloudspots was beside her, touching his nose against her forehead. "They're beautiful."He purred. "Just like you."

As Pebblestep and Honeypaw left Cherryleaf be to go get herbs, Falconpaw stood up and padded over to his mentor. Cherryleaf looked up and and let out a soft purr. "Hi there, come to see the new kits?"

Falconpaw nodded. "They look great." He said somewhat awkwardly, not exactly sure what he was supposed to say. "Do they have names?"

Cherryleaf nodded. "This one is Snowkit," She motioned to the white kit. "Then there's Windkit and Bluekit." She motioned to the gray cat followed by the blueish-gray kit. "Three she-cats."

"They're wonderful, Cherryleaf." Falconpaw purred. "You'll be a

great mother." He looked over the three kits, they were so tiny. They wouldn't be travelling soon, but Falconpaw got a strong sense of hope and compassion for these three kits. *They* are *my kin after all.* Falconpaw thought. "I'll let you get some rest."

"Thank you." Cherryleaf purred and Falconpaw turned away. He walked away, his mind wandering off. This past half moon had been peaceful ever since they had defeated Hornet and rescued Honeypaw but there was something clawing inside Falconpaw. He couldn't shake what he felt when fighting Hornet.

The red haze, the pure fiery anger that left in sore and trembling. The fact that he had taken the life of another cat. He had thought about doing to Hornet the entire time, but now that he had actually done it...it felt strange to him. He had almost forgotten the whole fight, he could remember fighting, the hissing of battle and the smell and taste of blood. He could also remember hearing Falconclaw's voice in his ear. *Was that just my mind? Or is Falconclaw actually able to talk to me here.*

Falconpaw didn't want to think about it, he wanted to clear his mind and celebrate what they had gained, not what he had lost. Honeypaw was back, safe and unharmed. Cherryleaf had given birth to three healthy kits and almost every single cat was completely recovered from the coyotes. It was still cold out, but sickness wasn't a concern. They had more than enough catmint remaining to get through the leaf-bare.

"Falconpaw." Falconpaw's ears twitched and he pulled himself out of his thoughts. He turned to see Dawnstar approaching him. "May I talk to you?"

He nodded. "Sure." Falconpaw stood up, he wasn't sure what this was about. He had already spoken to her about him killing Hornet. She told him that it was alright, Hornet was outside of the warrior code and he did it out of protection for himself and Honeypaw. Falconpaw followed Dawnstar through the barn, towards the back where Dawnstar and Lionclaw slept.

He was surprised when he saw Nightpaw and Riverstar sitting there as well. He tilted his head. "What's this about?" Nightpaw

questioned, following his mother to the two AshClan she-cats.

"Thanks for coming." Riverstar dipped her head.

"What's going on?" Nightpaw questioned, Falconpaw noticed that she was avoiding looking at him. He wasn't sure what Nightpaw's problem was, he saved her when the coyotes attacked. She had looked at him with a sense of shock, like he had never seen him attack before.

"Riverstar and I have been talking about something involving you two." Dawnstar began, Falconpaw gave his mother a quizzical look. "You two have shown time and time again during this journey to be brave, powerful and loyal cats."

"Nightpaw," Riverstar spoke. "You were incredibly brave during the fight with the coyotes as well as the rogues. During this journey you have been there to help your Clanmates and support them through the hard times we've had. Wheatwhisker would be incredibly proud of you."

Nightpaw looked down at her paws for a moment, taking a deep breath then looking up at Riverstar. "Where are you going with this?"

"Falconpaw," Dawnstar mewed instead of answering. "You have fought incredibly bravely and shown amazing skill in battle. I've spoken with Cherryleaf and she thinks the same, she hasn't been able to mentor you as much due to her kits, but she is just as proud of you as I am." Dawnstar looked at Riverstar, they shared a small nod. "We think you're both ready to become warriors."

Falconpaw's jaw dropped, for the first time he and Nightpaw looked at each other. She had the same shocked expression on his face. "We're becoming warriors?" Falconpaw stepped forward. "Are we having the ceremony together?"

"It will be two different ceremonies," Riverstar explained. "I will be holding Nightpaw's and then afterwards Dawnstar will be holding yours, Falconpaw. You're both ready, I've seen your skills Falconpaw and I agree with Dawnstar."

"And I've seen yours, Nightpaw." Dawnstar mewed. "It's been an honor to see other apprentices grow as mine have."

"Then it's settled, we will hold the ceremony now. In front of all four Clans. You two should prepare." Dawnstar and Riverstar walked away together, leaving Falconpaw and Nightpaw alone.

Falconpaw turned to look at the AshClan apprentice. "I can't believe we're becoming warriors *together*."

"It's odd isn't it?" Nightpaw turned away.

"Seems like yesterday you and I fought for the first time."

"It wasn't much of a fight now was it?" Nightpaw glanced over her shoulder, a mysterious glint in her yellow eyes. "You were just a kit."

"My skills have certainly improved." Falconpaw tried to make light of the situation, Nightpaw was clearly uncomfortable around him.

"They have, you must have pretty good mentors." Falconpaw flattened his ears. *Mentors?* He took a step back from her. "Sorry, I meant mentor." Nightpaw corrected herself and began walking away from him. "We should prepare for our ceremonies."

Falconpaw watched her go, feeling unnerved by the look in her eyes. *You don't make that kind of mistake.* He thought. *What does she know.* Her narrowed his eyes, staring after her. *Why* would *she know about Falconclaw?* He shook his head. *It's not my concern, today is the day I become a warrior.*

Falconpaw walked through the barn, holding his head high and walking proudly. He had been waiting for this day since he was a kit. He imagined his ceremony everyday, he had always pictured it being in SunClan camp, but it was pretty amazing that he would be named a SunClan warrior in front of all four Clans.

He passed the medicine cats as he padded through the barn, his eyes rested on Honeypaw. There was a part of him that wished Honeypaw was beside him. When he first became an apprentice he would've been mad about it but Falconpaw almost lost Honeypaw,

and now he was just happy that she was here to see it. *I'll show her the same support when she earns her full medicine cat name.*

"Let all cats old enough to catch their own prey gather for a meeting!" Riverstar and Dawnstar called together, getting the attention of all Clan cats. A lot of them were confused but they gathered regardless. Falconpaw found Nightpaw once more and they sat near each other. Falconpaw met the gaze of Lionclaw, his amber eyes burned with pride. Falconpaw held his father's gaze and gave him a nod.

"Today we're doing something a little different." Dawnstar began. "Both Riverstar and I have talked about this and we have decided to make two of our apprentices warriors."

"I will be holding a ceremony welcoming Nightpaw as our newest warrior, and then Dawnstar will make Falconpaw a warrior. Both of these cats have proved themselves to be brave and loyal." Riverstar stood up in front of Nightpaw and began the ceremony. "I, Riverstar, leader of AshClan call upon my warrior ancestors to look down on this apprentice for she had trained long and hard to understand the ways of your noble code and I commend her to you as a warrior in her turn." Nightpaw stared up, her yellow eyes filling with fear, pride and confidence. "Nightpaw, do you promise to uphold the warrior code and defend the Clan even at the cost of your life?"

"I do." Falconpaw could hear the pure certainty in her voice.

"Then by the powers of StarClan I give you your warrior name! Nightpaw, from this day forward you will be known as Nightheart. AshClan honors your courage and dedication to your Clan and we welcome you as a full warrior of AshClan!" Riverstar stepped forward and touched her nose to Nightheart's forehead, Nightheart in turn licked Riverstar's shoulder.

"Nightheart! Nightheart!" The barn echoed with the sounds of all four Clans cheering for the newest warrior. Falconpaw held his head high, it was his turn next. He had waited so long for this day.

"Now it's my turn." Dawnstar purred, stepping forward. Falconpaw

met Dawnstar's gaze, feeling his heart race. *I'm ready for this.* "I, Dawnstar, leader of SunClan call upon my warrior ancestors to look down on this apprentice for he has trained long and hard to understand the ways of your noble code and I commend him to you as a warrior in his turn." Falconpaw took a deep breath. "Falconpaw, do you promise to uphold the warrior code and defend the Clan even at the cost of your life?"

"I do." He spoke boldly, letting his confidence show to every cat that watched him. *I* will *be the best warrior the forest has ever seen. That's what I trained for.*

"Then by the powers of StarClan I give you your warrior name! Falconpaw, from this day forward you will be known as Falconheart. SunClan honors your bravery and skill in battle and we welcome you as a full warrior of SunClan!"

Falconheart stood up, facing his mother. She touched her muzzle to his forehead. "I'm so proud of you." She whispered quietly. Dawnstar stepped back and Falconheart licked her shoulder. "Falconheart! Falconheart!" The Clans cheered his name now, he felt their praise swelling inside of him, spreading through his body like a light.

Falconheart heard pawsteps running towards him and looked to see Honeypaw dashing towards him. "You're a warrior!" She exclaimed. "I'm so happy for you!" She nuzzled him, Falconheart let out a purr.

Lionclaw, Cherryleaf and Dawnstar approached him as well. "When you were a kit I feared this day wouldn't come." Lionclaw chuckled, placing his paw on Falconheart's head and ruffling the fur on his head. Falconheart ducked away, laughing. He knew his father was just joking.

"I'm very proud of you." Cherryleaf purred. "You've certainly come a long way since I first started training you."

"One of the best things about being leader is being able to hold my kits' ceremonies. I won't be able to name Honeypaw as a full medicine cat, but being able to make you a warrior has made me the happiest cat in the forest."

Falconheart laughed along with his family, feeling a sense of pride and accomplishment. *I've finally become a warrior.* He thought, then a glint in the sky caught his eye. He stared up at the night sky. His mind drifted to Falconclaw. *Is he proud of me?*

Chapter 19

The stars swirled above Honeypaw's head, shimmering brighter than she had ever seen. Honeypaw looked around, it was warm greenleaf night. She breathed in the sweet scent of the flora around her. She had missed this season, missed the warm nights and peaceful skies. Honeypaw looked around, she was in what looked like a camp. She was in a deep stone hollow with several dens around her. *Where am I?* Honeypaw wondered, this place was completely unfamiliar to her and yet she felt like she belonged her. It was familiar, and she felt welcomed and safe.

Honeypaw walked around this camp, she could smell the scent of prey and the sound of voices. *Who's talking?* Honeypaw blinked and suddenly there were cats around her. SunClan cats, living their lives as usual. Applespots and Icepetal ate from a fresh-kill pile in the back of camp. Dawnstar was sitting outside of a cave in the side of the stone walls talking with Cinderflame and Lionclaw.

Sedgepaw, Petalpaw and Dovepaw were all laughing outside a small bush den that was close to another, large den with warriors outside of it. Redclaw, Fawnheart and Briarrose were talking outside of the den while Crowfur stepped inside with Rainears. Honeypaw heard the squealing of kits and turned to see a stone den. Goldenleaf was sitting outside while Hollykit and Burnkit played with a ball of moss, Cherryleaf was inside nursing Bluekit, Windkit and Snowkit.

What is this place? It feels so wonderful. SunClan is safe and happy. A breeze ruffled Honeypaw's fur, carrying the strong scent of herbs. She turned to see another cave den, Honeypaw followed the scent and approached the den. She peered inside, it smelled strongly of herbs, remaining Honeypaw of the medicine cat den back home. There were two nests beside each other and several more across the den. She spotted a pile of moss in the corner next to a small pool of water.

"Honeypaw?" Honeypaw heard a familiar voice behind her, she

jumped slightly and turned around. She saw Pebblestep standing outside of the den, looking as confused as Honeypaw felt. "I thought I was here alone."

"Is this a dream?" Honeypaw questioned, approaching her mentor. "Where are we?"

Pebblestep nodded. "This is a dream yes, but as to where we are..." She looked around. "I'm not sure."

"It feels like a safe place." Honeypaw pointed out. "And all of our Clanmates seem so happy and comfortable. It's almost like a camp, like SunClan camp."

Honeypaw heard a small gasp from Pebblestep. "Honeypaw," She breathed out. "This is our future camp! StarClan is showing us what to look for!" Joy filled Pebblestep's eyes, she ran out into the camp. "This place will be our home!"

"This is amazing." Honeypaw purred, this really did look like a wonderful place to live. She was overjoyed that this would be SunClan's home, it filled her with so much happiness and hope. "It looks so safe."

"When we wake up we need to tell Dawnstar about this, if we're having this dream I'm fairly certain that the other medicine cats will be dreaming of their own camps as well. It's our sign to finally leave."

A chilling cry filled the air, Honeypaw and Pebblestep looked up towards the stars. As they glanced up a pure white owl flew across the sky, letting out its chilling call. Honeypaw's eyes stuck to the owl, watching its glowing feathers as it slowly got out of reach into the trees. "That's the same owl." Honeypaw said under her breath. "This is our sign."

Honeypaw's eyes opened and she found herself back in the barn. She instantly found herself longing to be back in that camp. *SunClan is meant to be there.* As Honeypaw sat up in her nests the other medicine cats begin to rouse as well. Honeypaw locked eyes with Pebblestep, she could see the other medicine cats doing the same.

"Did you dream of your camps as well?" Pebblestep questioned.

"Oneflight and I dreamed of MoonClan's camp." Ravenheart mewed. "It was incredible, and then we saw an owl overhead."

"Blackpaw and I experienced the same thing." Skyfeather added.

"As did I." Roseheart put in. "That's our sign to leave and continue our journey, we must be getting close."

"I agree," Pebblestep stood up. "We need to speak with our leaders and let them know. Cherryleaf's kits are half a moon old, they'll be able to travel." Honeypaw stood up along with her mentor and they and the other medicine cats sought out the four leaders.

"Riverstar," Skyfeather mewed, getting the blue-gray she-cat's attention. "We need to talk," He looked at Dawnstar, Shadowstar and Timbertail. "We've all had a dream."

The leader's were instantly intrigued, they all faced the medicine cats. "What was the dream?" Shadowstar inquired.

"Each of us dreamed of our Clan's future camp. Honeypaw and I were in a stone hollow, then an owl flew over the forest." Pebblestep explained.

"Blackpaw and I were at the base of a mountain in a clearing. There was plenty of space and protection for all of AshClan and more."

"I was in a plateau, surrounded by towering trees and thick forestry." Roseheart mewed.

"And Oneflight and I were in a deep hollow, we saw each den and who they were for." Ravenheart finished. "This is our sign that it's time to continue and if we go off Skyfeather and Blackpaw's dream, we need to head towards the mountains."

"Are you okay to travel?" Timbertail questioned Shadowstar with concern in his eyes.

Ravenheart stood up and gave Shadowstar's old wound a sniff. "There's no sign of infection and it's healing well. Shadowstar will

be able to travel."

"As will Cherryleaf and her kits," Pebblestep added. "They'll need to be carried but we can handle that. We should leave today."

"Very well," Dawnstar dipped her head. "That sounds like a good plan to me, gather up the herbs you all have and prepare to travel with them in case sickness sets in again. I hope we will see the end of our journey very soon."

"We will call a meeting and tell the rest of the Clans that it's finally time to go." Riverstar stood up. "We should hurry."

While the leader's told the Clan cats it was time to leave the medicine cats gathered up their herbs, wrapping them in large leaf bundles. They had plenty of catmint and travelling herbs for the kits and elders. Once they had everything gathered, Honeypaw gave some strength herbs to Cherryleaf, Hollykit, Burnkit and Snakewhisker who still had a small cough. Once every cat that needed herbs had them, it was time to go.

"Before we leave," Riverstar called out, stopping the Clans. "There's something I wish to do." Her blue eyes rested on the rogue Primrose who sood shy in the back of the barn. "Primrose, you've stayed with us for half a moon now. You've helped hunt and protect all of the Clans and I want to know if you would like to join the ranks of AshClan."

"What?" Primrose's eyes went wide and her jaw dropped. "You really want me to join AshClan?"

Riverstar nodded. "I told you that the day I met you I sensed something in you, and I wish to have you in my Clan. You will be a wonderful addition to AshClan. If you wish to join us then you will continue this journey with us and find our new home with us. So, what's your answer?"

Primrose hesitated for just a moment. "I-" She took a deep breath, steadying her voice. "I would love to. I have nowhere else to go and joining AshClan would give me a home and cats who will look out for me."

Riverstar purred, her blue eyes elated. "You're young, not much older than Dustpaw and his siblings so you will be made an apprentice. "Primrose, from this day forward until you have earned your warrior name you will be known as Primrosepaw. Haresong is a kind and compassionate she-cat who recently lost her son. She came to me directly and told me that she wanted to mentor you. I have great faith that Haresong will be a wonderful mentor to you."

Haresong stepped forward to face Primrosepaw, they touched noses and shared a caring gaze. "Primrosepaw! Primrosepaw!" The Clans cheered for the new AshClan apprentice, Honeypaw felt a surge of happiness. Primrosepaw had been the only cat to show her kindness while she had been trapped and terrified in Hornet's camp and she lost both of her parents. *She's kind and she has the heart of a warrior, I can tell.*

Primrosepaw was welcomed by her new Clanmates and the Clan's finally prepared to leave. Honeypaw realized that Primrosepaw was the second rogue to join the Clans in such a short amount of time. Flashtail had joined SunClan right before they left and he already felt like a true Clanborn warrior.

"Are we ready?" Shadowstar called out to the Clans. Murmurs of agreement spread throughout the cats and they stepped out of the barn into the chilly morning air. There was a familiar cry above her head in the sky. Honeypaw looked up as the white owl soared across the skies, heading directly towards the mountains. *That owl is guiding us home.* Honeypaw breathed out, feeling warmed by the thought of home. *I can't wait to get there.*

Chapter 20

Blackpaw walked beside Skyfeather lost in his thoughts. He thought of the home that he had seen in his dream. The perfect camp for AshClan, with everything they needed and more. He longed to be there, to be back inside a medicine cat den with herbs. The four Clans living their lives as they had back in the forest. *What awaits for us there? Will it be full of herbs and prey?* Blackpaw had an incredibly strong feeling that it would be, that it would be perfect for his Clanmates. Hailkit, Sagekit, Dewkit, Mistkit and Slatekit would all grow up there. All future kits would be born in that nursery.

After just one day of travel, the Clans were approaching the mountains. Though the day drew to a close, Blackpaw was certain they would find their new homes by tomorrow night at the latest. Blackpaw didn't know what to feel, he was so happy that his Clans would find their homes. His Clanmates would be safe and sound in their new camp, able to live safe and happy lives.

But... Blackpaw looked over at Honeypaw, she was deep in conversation with Pebblestep and Oneflight near Ravenheart. *I'll have to say goodbye to her. We won't get to see each other every day, only during the gatherings and half-moons.* He let out a saddened sigh, he wondered if Honeypaw even cared. *Does she feel the same way about me?* Blackpaw shook his head. *I shouldn't feel that way about her.*

Blackpaw stared at her paws. *Maybe it's for the best that we're returning to our separate Clans.* He took a deep breath, trying to get Honeypaw out of his mind. He had many more things to focus on. They had to not only make sure their new home was full of herbs but they had to find a place to hold gatherings and perhaps even more challenging, find a place to communicate with StarClan. Would they find another moonstone? They had to, the needed a way to speak with StarClan.

Blackpaw kept his mind on the new territory, his new camp, his

new home. *If I can just focus on that...* Blackpaw told himself, taking a deep, shaky breath. He thought about the camp that he had seen in his dream. The camp rested at the base of the towering mountains. Both the leader's den and the medicine cat were caves in the side of the stone, perfect for holding herbs and sick cats.

When he had been in the cap the air had been filled with the wonderful scent of pine trees, he already knew what he was looking for. *It really will be a perfect camp for AshClan.* Blackpaw reminded himself, he was genuinely happy that his Clan would be safe and thriving in this new camp.

"Hey there!" A cheerful voice pulled Blackpaw out of his thoughts. He looked to his side to see Nightheart trotted up beside him. "You look so down," She pointed out. "I'd thought you'd be happy, we're almost to our new home!"

"I am happy." Blackpaw assured her. "I'm just nervous, there's still a lot we have to do once we get there before we return to normal Clan life. We need to find a gathering place, a place to communicate with StarClan, we need to place borders between the territories, we--"

"Blackpaw," Nightheart cut him off. "Don't worry so much about it. Right now you should just be focused on getting there. I'm sure we'll figure everything out with time." She nudged him. "Keep your chin up."

"Sorry." Blackpaw replied awkwardly, flattening his ears slightly. "There's just a lot on my mind."

"Understandable." Nightheart nodded. "I wish I could've been made a warrior in the new territory but it was pretty cool that I was made a warrior on the journey. Even if I did have to share my ceremony with Falconheart."

Blackpaw shrugged. "He's not that bad, or at least not anymore."

"I suppose." Nightheart flicked her tail. "There's still something I don't like about him." She let out a sigh. "I shouldn't think about it too much, I won't have to deal with him here soon.

Blackpaw nodded. "We'll all be back in our own territories."

"I have to admit it's going to be weird." Nightheart added. "I've gotten used to hunting with cats from the other Clans."

"Soon we'll be back to being enemies." Blackpaw responded, his voice low.

"Wow," Nightheart looked at Blackpaw with playful skepticism. "Way to be a downer, we don't *have* to be enemies. I highly doubt we'll go back to fighting right away. We'll have to work together for a while yet." Blackpaw just nodded, Nightheart narrowed her eyes. "Are you sure there's not something more? You seem really upset about something."

Blackpaw avoided her gaze, he had always thought he would tell Nightheart everything, no matter what. But he couldn't tell her about Honeypaw. "I'm sure." Blackpaw replied, finally looking back at her. "I'm just stressed." Blackpaw rested his tail on her shoulders. "I'll be okay once we figure everything out, I promise."

"Alright." Nightheart was very clearly unconvinced but she dropped the subject with Blackpaw was incredibly grateful.
The Clans continued their journeyed for the rest of the day, stopping to sleep in a small abandoned twoleg nest then continued bright and early the next morning. Blackpaw could see the mountains already, they were less than a half-day's travel away. He walked in silence, not talking to anyone while the Clans travelled. He watched Honeypaw who was having a conversation with Falconheart, Nightheart who was with Rabbitpaw and Primrosepaw and Skyfeather who was also remaining silent.

As they travelled, the grass turned to stone and the mountains towered over head. The Clans had to leap up onto ledges, walking through a deep valley. In the distance Blackpaw could see trees. *That's it.* Blackpaw blinked, staring at the faint outline of the forest. *That's our new home.*

Excitement was vibrating from the Clan cats as they neared, they could all feel it as well. Even Blackpaw was feeling excited, it was still snowy but it could picture the beautiful trees in full bloom

during newleaf. *It really is a thing to celebrate.*

The Clans continued their travels through the valley, a breeze picked up through the mountains and Blackpaw could smell pine trees. He lifted his head, the smell reminded him of home. *This will be home, I just have to find it.* All of AshClan were perked up now, they could smell the pine trees and were excited to see their new home.

The pine trees were soon in sight, tall and strong with all their deep green needles. Blackpaw hadn't seen strong pine trees like this in such a long time, they were such a beautiful sight in leaf-bare. The Clans reached the edge of the pine tree forest and Blackpaw couldn't believe his eyes.

The ground was covered in snow but the trees stood tall, nearly blocking out the sun. Blackpaw closed his eyes and breathed in the scent of pine. Suddenly, he was back in AshClan's old camp. Surrounded by the protective trees. He could hear the rustling of the needles and the safety of his camp.

He opened his eyes once more. *But this isn't the old territory,* He reminded himself. *This is our* new *territory.* Blackpaw looked towards Riverstar as she lifted her head to speak. "Cats of the Clans, I'm sure you can all feel it the same way I can." She looked over her shoulder towards the forest. "This is the beginning of our new home."

Cheers rang out from every single cat, the kits and young apprentices jumped around with excitement. Even Blackpaw felt excitement surging through his veins, he looked around feeling a sense of joy and hope for the first time in a long time. "I think we should rest here for the night," Dawnstar mewed. "And send out a group of cats in the morning to explore the territory."

"I agree." Shadowstar nodded. "They will explore the entire territory and find camps for each Clan. We can send three cats from each Clan so we know what we're looking for."

The Clans agreed and settled down, the deputies sent out hunting parties and the Clans found places to sleep for the night. Blackpaw

laid down in a makeshift nest beside Skyfeather. Not far from him, Blackpaw could Honeypaw sleeping soundly. He let out a slight sigh, his earlier fears and sadness creeping up on him once more.

He closed his eyes, trying to forget about Honeypaw and focus on his new home. *In the next few days I'll be in my home. My new den with my Clanmates. Just focus on that.* Blackpaw told himself over and over, longing for the feeling to go away, but every time he just saw Honeypaw's bright green eyes. His heart felt frozen, and he wasn't sure what could possibly fix it.

Chapter 21

Falconheart took a drink from the chilly river. He knew that this river went through what would be AshClan territory but he hoped that SunClan would have a river in their territory. The only one they had before was right near the border to the gathering hollow. Falconheart took a step back from the river and shook his pelt free of pine needles and snow, he had no idea how AshClan could stand living in this forest of pine needles. He flicked his tail with annoyance, all night he had been pulling the stupid needles out of his pelt. He hoped that he wouldn't have to stay here much longer.

"Cats of the Clans!" Falconheart looked over his shoulder as he heard his mother's call. "Gather around! We have chosen the cats for the journey around the territories." Falconheart took one last drink and hurried over to where the Clans had gathered. He sat down beside Lionclaw near the front of the group, waiting patiently for the announcements.

"Now that we're all gathered," Shadowstar began. "We will be announcing the cats who are going." He looked over the crowd. "Pigeonpelt, Tallsong and Rainpaw from MoonClan will be going." The cats of MoonClan stood up, Rainpaw looking particularly excited, and stood together.

Timbertail stepped forward. "Stumptail, Twigheart and Brackenheart will be going for LichenClan.

Riverstar spoke up next. "From AshClan I will be sending, Lilyclaw, Nightheart and Rabbitpaw." Falconheart noticed that Rabbitpaw didn't exactly look thrilled, her eyes filled with trepidation and she lowered her head. Falconheart wondered how a cat could be so skittish, Rainpaw was younger than her and she couldn't wait to get going.

"Finally," Dawnstar started, looking over her Clan. "I've chosen Flamepetal, Sedgepaw and Falconheart." Falconheart lifted his head, blinking in slight surprise. Falconheart stood up, excited that

he was going to be one of the first to see the new territories.

"You all should set out as soon as possible." Riverstar instructed. "I'd expect it to take you all at least two days if you explore each territory thoroughly."

"We should leave now." Pigeonpelt mewed, instantly taking charge. Falconheart knew that Pigeonpelt was the oldest warrior here, just older than Twigheart. Normally Falconheart would complain about having to follow the orders of another Clan cat, but he had been doing that for the past moon, he would be okay doing it for a few more days.

"Where are we going to start?" Tallsong questioned her Clanmate.

"We should head that way," Pigeonpelt motioned with his head. "We'll search each territory thoroughly. We'll only be covering half of what I assume will be AshClan territory and if we don't find a camp for AshClan we'll search the other half.

"Sounds like a plan to me." Lilyclaw nodded her head as did Nightheart and Rabbitpaw. Falconheart flattened his ears, he was less than excited about having to travel with Nightheart. Somehow, she knew about his training with Falconclaw. Though he had no idea how a cat from another Clan would even figure that out. His own Clanmates, with the exception of Honeypaw had no idea and even Honeypaw didn't know *who* he was training with.

"Let's head out." Pigeonpelt mewed and with some farewells to their Clanmates, the group of cats headed out away from their makeshift camp. Falconheart looked around as they began their first moments of exploration. Falconheart sniffed around the territory, it was covered in snow but he knew it wouldn't last for long. As great as pine trees were, Falconheart longed to see SunClan's future territory.

The patrol searched the pine forest, looking for different features that AshClan could use in their new territory. On the other side of the river they found a sandy area that Lilyclaw and Nightheart agreed could be used for an apprentice training area. Falconheart walked alongside Flamepetal and Sedgepaw as the cats searched the

pine forest.

The day continued on and the patrol searched the pine trees until the trees started to thin out. Through the few remaining pine trees Falconheart could see bare trees in the distance. They reminded Falconheart of the trees back in SunClan territory. Could this be SunClan's new territory? Falconheart had to stop himself from running ahead of his patrol mates.

"Looks like this could be the end of AshClan territory." Pigeonpelt mewed as they neared the different trees. "It almost looks like the old AshClan and SunClan border."

"Borders will have to be discussed once we establish our territories." Lilyclaw added, a slight edge to her mew. Falconheart narrowed his eyes at the gray tabby she-cat. *Already trying to take more territory than you need?* Falconheart flicked his tail but kept his silence, there was no need to start an argument right now.

"Let's just continue. Twigheart urged and started leading the way. They padded deeper into this forest and Falconheart felt a sense of familiarity. *I think this could be SunClan's new home.* Falconheart held his head high and walked through the forest with a newfound sense of confidence and hope.

"What's that over there?" Falconheart looked to see Rainpaw bounding over to something she had spotted in the distance.

"Rainpaw, wait!" Tallsong cried after the apprentice and chased after her. "We don't know what could be hiding in these territories!"

Rainpaw came to a stop and turned to the patrol with confusion in her eyes. "I'm not running off far, I just saw something." She turned her head down, looking at something just in front of her. Falconheart and the rest of the patrol followed Tallsong and Rainpaw to whatever it was that the apprentice had discovered.

Falconheart looked down at what she found. There was a den in the ground, but it was collapsed, leaving a mound of earth and grass. "It's a collapsed badger den." Brackenheart mewed. "We used to have on in LichenClan territory."

"Badgers?" Sedgepaw flattened her ears slightly, looking around with concern. "Is there badgers around here?"

Twigheart sniffed the air. "I don't think so," The pale brown she-cat mewed. "I can't scent any, and if this den is collapsed there's a good chance the badger left it behind or was killed in it."

"We should still be on the lookout, though." Lilyclaw added. "If a badger lived here once it could live here again."

"Are badger's bad?" Sedgepaw questioned, looking up at Flamepetal and Falconheart.

"They can be," Flamepetal mewed. "Windflight and Blazeheart, Dawnstar's parents, were killed by a badger. With enough cats a badger can be easily dealt with."

"Plus," Falconheart added, nudging Sedgepaw. He wanted to soothe any fears that she might have. "With what we've faced on this journey, how scary could a badger possibly be?"

"It's mousebrained to think that way." Falconheart's fur stood on end at the sharp tone of Nightheart. He met the AshClan warrior's yellow gaze, twitching his tail in annoyance. "Just because you can fight a coyote doesn't mean you can fight every other creature in the forest."

"I saved you from a coyote didn't I?" Falconheart sneered, he remembered seeing Nightheart cornered by one of the wretched creatures. He had fought it off and saved her life.

"Leave it to a SunClan cat to brag about saving someone's life." Nightheart's gaze burned with irritation.

"Nightheart." Lilyclaw snapped, baring her teeth. "We've been spending the past moon together, you can handle a few more days with Falconheart." She stared down Nightheart who avoided Lilyclaw's gaze. "And if you can't then I suggest you head back to the others now and send someone who can keep a level head, understand?"

Nightheart flattened her ears and stared at the ground, anger and

embarrassment sparking in her eyes. "Yes, I understand." Falconheart held his head high until he felt Flamepetal's green gaze burning into his pelt.

"The same goes for you Falconheart." She growled. "You may be a warrior now but you still have all the arrogance you did as an apprentice. Either respect the cats you're with or keep your tongue to yourself."

Falconheart flattened his ears as well, he hadn't been scolded like that in a while. He just nodded and kept silent. "As interesting as a collapsed badger den is," Pigeonpelt mewed. "I suggest we move on." The patrol left the badger den behind and continued moving through the bare, snowy forest.

As they did with the pine forest, the patrol scoured the new territory. In the distance, Falconheart could hear the bubbling of a river. He looked around, seeing the glistening water through the trees. The river from where they had arrived had gone through the entirety of the pine forest and must have continued up through this forest.

"I wish we could fish." Rainpaw sighed. "We haven't had any fish since before leaf-bare." She dropped her head sadly. "I miss eating fish and being able to swim."

"Hopefully in our new territory we'll have all the fish we can eat," Tallsong purred. "And a beautiful river to swim in."

Falconheart couldn't agree with the need to swim or eat fish, but he did relate on missing his home. He missed the towering trees overhead, sunning himself in SunClan camp under the warm, sunhigh rays.

"I think I see a hollow." Twigheart mewed. "Didn't Honeypaw and Pebblestep say that SunClan's camp was in a stone hollow?"

Falconheart nodded, quickly stepping up beside Twigheart. He squinted through the trees and saw what Twigheart had seen. It was a stone hollow, but there didn't seem to be much in it. "I remember most of what Honeypaw told me about the camp she saw."

Falconheart responded. "We should explore it."

The rest of the patrol agreed and hurried on towards the stone hollow. As they neared it, Falconheart realized it was much bigger than he thought. He could see overgrown brush inside of the hollow, lining the walls.

They reached the stone hollow which was deep in the ground, Falconheart looked over the gray stone, looking for a safe way to get into the hollow. Most sides of the hollow were jagged and too high up to jump into without risking injury.

His eyes scanned the hollow until he found a snowy path leading down into the hollow. "Over here." He motioned with his head and guided the patrol to the path he found. It was slick from the snow, but the patrol made it into the hollow without issue. Falconheart looked around, looking for the signs that Honeypaw had told him about.

In the back of the hollow he saw two caves, one was larger than the other. *The leader's den and medicine cat den.* Falconheart thought, remembering Honeypaw's description. *The leader den was a big cave in the back wall, the medicine cat den was near that and was a smaller cave. Then, there should be a stone den against the back wall. That's the nursery.* Falconheart saw all three dens. *The elder's den is a bush den near the nursery, and the warrior and apprentice dens are also two bush dens close to each other.*

Falconheart didn't see any bush dens, but he did see several overgrown bushes that, with enough work, could easily be made into dens. "This is exactly the camp that Honeypaw described." Falconheart mewed.

"So this is going to be SunClan's new camp?" Sedgepaw bounced around with glee, looking all around the hollow. "It looks so cozy!" Sedgepaw ran over to the large tangle of brush. "This could be my new den!" She continued running around with joy, calling out the dens and excitedly sniffing around.

"This does look nice." Flamepetal breathed out in a half-sigh. "Definitely needs some work but..." Flamepetal approached the

brush. "In time it could be a good home for our Clan."

Falconheart agreed, he began exploring as well. It was big, roomy and spacious. The apprentice den would actually be back in the camp with all the other dens. It probably wouldn't be as big but the apprentices would be in the protection of the camp with the warriors.

Falconheart watched Sedgepaw, inspired by her joy and energy. *She's so excited.* Falconheart thought with a purr. Through the entire journey Sedgepaw had proven herself to be a talented, mature and joyous cat. She was brave, fierce and fought like a fully grown warrior. *She'll make an incredible warrior.* Falconheart through with a purr.

"We should continue." Twigheart spoke up. "It's nearly dusk and we've only seen two territories." Falconheart hesitated for just a moment, he didn't want to leave. He wanted to move into his camp right now, but Falconheart knew that was impossible. He withheld a sigh and nodded while Flamepetal got the attention of Sedgepaw who quickly returned to the patrol.

"We'll see the rest of SunClan territory and rest in the next camp we find." Pigeonpelt mewed. "Then we'll continue bright and early in the morning."

"What about prey?" Lilyclaw asked. "Will we hunt?"

Pigeonpelt nodded. "Yes, we can hunt once we find a place to rest." With that, the patrol left SunClan camp and continued on their way through SunClan territory. Falconheart was incredibly pleased to find that there was a river in sight just as they left the camp.

As the neared the river, the patrol passed a low hollow in the ground. Falconheart thought as they passed that it could be a good training area for the apprentices. The reached the river and discovered a large stone in the middle of it that provided an easy way to cross.

Once they were across they discovered they were in a small field. They padded for only a few moments before Falconheart spotted

another river. This one was bigger and on the other side was a few trees, but with focus Falconheart could see moor through them.

"Think that could be our new territory?" Rainpaw questioned Tallsong and Pigeonpelt. "It looks like moorland, and there's a river!"

"Possibly." Tallsong purred. "I remember what Oneflight and Ravenheart told us to look for in our camp so we'll have to see." The patrol approached the river, it wasn't as easy to cross this one Falconheart realized anxiously as he looked across the river's surface.

Peeking out from the very top were small stepping stones. Falconheart tensed up at the thought of crossing that. He had crossed the river to the gathering hollow but they had been more than the very tips poking out of the water.

"Let's cross." Pigeonpelt didn't waste much time waiting for the others. He stepped on the stones and quickly crossed the stones without fear. Tallsong did the same and so did Rainpaw, leaving the others anxiously waiting.

"Don't be scared!" Rainpaw called. "If any of you fall in we can swim to save you!" She jumped around Tallsong.

"Well then." Lilyclaw said, her voice tense. "Let's just do it." The gray tabby she-cat cautiously stepped up to the river banks, placing a tender paw on the first stone. Falconheart heard a deep breath from the AshClan she-cat and she crossed slowly and shakily. Lilyclaw reached the other side and turned over to look at her patrol mates. "It's not too bad, just be careful."

Falconheart watched the other cats cross, he noticed that Rabbitpaw in particular was terrified. Despite her shaking, the small apprentice crossed without incident. When it finally came to Falconheart he had to force himself to be brave. *If the most skittish apprentice can cross this river then I should be able to as well.* Falconheart took a deep breath and held his head high.

He placed his paws on the stones, feeling the icy water lap at his

toes. Suppressing a shiver, Falconheart put one paw in front of the other and continued to cross. He was nearly over when he felt his hind paw slip off the rock and into the water.

Alarm shot through his entire body and in a split second he imagined his body falling into the river below. Freezing and drowning with no way to reach the surface. The alarm send him leaping from the current rock he was on to the other side of the river.

He landed panting, his fur puffed out and his heart racing. From around him, Falconheart could hear laughter from his patrol mates. He looked at them, puffing up even more when he saw how much they were laughing at him.

"You alright, Falconheart?" Lilyclaw asked with an amused purr.

"Y-yes." Falconheart struggled to smooth down his fur and despite the chilly air his entire pelt burned with embarrassment. "I just slipped." He added under his breath. They waited for the rest of the cats to cross before they moved on.

Still feeling the embarrassment bite under his skin, Falconheart kept quiet as they crossed the moor.

"This reminds me so much of our old moor!" Rainpaw exclaimed. "This *has* to be our new home! I know it!" With Rainpaw's excitement guiding them, Falconheart and the rest of the patrol travelled through the moorland. It didn't take long before they spotted a deep hollow in the moor.

"That's it!" Once again, Rainpaw ran ahead of everyone else without looking back.

"Rainpaw!" Tallsong called out. "Stop! You shouldn't run off!" The dark gray she-cat took off in a sprint after the apprentice. Falconheart was surprised at how quickly they moved.

"That apprentice needs to learn how to control her excitement." Lilyclaw mewed. "She's gonna get herself into trouble."

As Lilyclaw spoke, Falconheart heard a shrill cry coming from

ahead. "That's Rainpaw!" Pigeonpelt cried and the entire patrol took off running after Tallsong and Rainpaw. Falconheart ran as fast as he could, praying that Rainpaw would be okay.

They skidded to a stop at the base of a the hollow. Falconheart searched the hollow for Rainpaw. He spotted her tangled up in a patch of brambles. Tallsong was already beside the brambles helping get the apprentice out.

"Are you alright?" Pigeonpelt questioned with concern in his mew.

"Yeah," Rainpaw sighed, trying to pull herself out of the brambles. "I just tripped."

"You shouldn't have ran ahead." Tallsong sighed, ripping away a large bramble. "You could've gotten seriously hurt. We don't know what's in these territories. We've already talked about this."

"I know." Rainpaw flattened her ears. "I'm sorry." Tallsong fasted her teeth into Rainpaw's scruff and ripped her out of the brambles. Rainpaw let out a squeak of pain as she was pulled. She left behind tufts of black fur and Falconheart noticed blood drawing from a few spots.

"You should be fine." Tallsong set the apprentice down. "Wash the injuries and we should rest." Tallsong looked around. "This looks like what Oneflight and Ravenheart described to me." Tallsong looked around. "That's the leader's den." She motioned towards a pile of rocks in the center of the hollow. "We should sleep there."

"Pigeonpelt, Flamepetal and I can go hunting." Lilyclaw volunteered. "The rest of you start resting. We have a long day tomorrow. We need to find LichenClan territory, a gathering hollow, a place to talk with StarClan and find a camp for AshClan."

Falconheart didn't even want to hunt, he was cold and exhausted from walking all day. He and his patrol mates went into Shadowstar's future den. Lilyclaw and the others returned shortly after with prey. The patrol ate and quickly went to sleep.

Falconheart stayed close to Flamepetal and Sedgepaw. He closed his

eyes, feeling the exhaustion of his journey weighing down on his shoulders. The moment Falconheart closed his eyes, he slipped into a refreshing sleep.

Chapter 22

Nightheart let out a yawn, glancing at Rabbitpaw who was just barely waking up. Nightheart had felt Rabbitpaw twitching in her sleep. It used to annoy Nightheart but now she felt concerned. *I wonder if it's nightmares.* Nightheart wondered, worried for her friend. Nightheart sat up and smoothed down her fur before glancing around the den. Tallsong, Pigeonpelt and Rainpaw were already gone, presumably to explore their future camp.

Nightheart didn't really care for MoonClan's territory. It was barren and even colder than it was in even SunClan's territory. Nightheart already missed the new AshClan territory, the pine trees were lush and beautiful. She had been incredibly upset when Pigeonpelt forced them to move on without finding AshClan's camp.

Despite her annoyance, Nightheart kept her mouth shut and just explored the territories with her patrol. She wished that she didn't have to travel with Falconheart, despite him becoming a warrior and whatever Blackpaw said about him, Nightheart knew he was still as arrogant as ever.

Nightheart was also convinced that Blackpaw was only saying that because of his weird feelings for Honeypaw. She was starting to become annoyed of Honeypaw as well. *Who does that she-cat think she is? She needs to leave my brother alone.* Nightheart shook away her irritated thoughts and left the den.

As the chilly morning air ruffled Nightheart's fur she shivered and clenched her teeth. *Stupid leaf-bare.* It was just after dawn, the sun peeking through the clouds in the pale sky. Nightheart looked around the new camp. Pigeonpelt, Tallsong and Rainpaw were exploring an old badger den on the other side of the camp.

"I hope we get moving soon." Nightheart heard a tired mew from behind her. She looked over her shoulder and saw Flamepetal stepping out of the rockpile den. "I want to get settled into our new camp."

"And I want to find mine." Nightheart said quietly.

"You will." Flamepetal brushed her tail across Nightheart's pelt for a moment before stepping forwards and going to the MoonClan cats. Nightheart sat outside the den, waiting patiently for the other cats to wake up.

The last cat to wake up was Twigheart, the old she-cat stood up and stretched once she got out. "Skies look cloudy." The LichenClan she-cat mewed while glancing up at the sky. "Hopefully it doesn't snow while we're travelling, I'd hate for this to be a three day trip."

"We should leave, then." Pigeonpelt mewed as they approached the rest of the patrol. "We don't know how much ground we have left to cover."

After a quick morning hunting a session and a bird that Nightheart shared with Rabbitpaw and Lilyclaw. She wasn't completely satisfied, but Nightheart wanted to continue and she knew that the others did too.

They left MoonClan's future camp to explore the rest of the moorland. Right behind the camp they discovered a frozen pond which overjoyed Rainpaw. Nightheart didn't share Rainpaw's love of swimming, but she was glad that MoonClan had a territory that they would enjoy.

Nightheart walked alongside Rabbitpaw, keeping quiet and listening passively to the conversations of the cats around her.

"So is Larkclaw going to be Timbertail's deputy?" Lilyclaw asked Twigheart. "She seems to be taking the role of it."

Twigheart nodded. "Timbertail has already said that Larkclaw would be his deputy. Some are concerned because they're kin, but Mossleaf was Jaggedstar's niece. Timbertail and Larkclaw are close friends and I think she'll make a fine deputy."

"She's always seemed like a competent cat. Has Roseheart talked about taking an apprentice any time soon?" Lilyclaw wondered.

"Krestlekit and Briarkit haven't shown any interest but there's

always Leafsong's kits. It would be nice for Roseheart to mentor one of her nieces." Twigheart purred.

Tired of hearing about the news in LichenClan, Nightheart tuned them out focusing on the moorland ahead of her. The other cats were just talking about how excited they were about their territories. Nightheart was excited too but there was just something under her skin. It bit at her and clawed at her heart, she couldn't shake it.

Why do I feel like this? Nightheart wondered, staring at the snowy ground beneath her paws. She hated this clouded feeling of dread that clogged her heart and thoughts. *I should be filled with a sense of adventure.* Taking a deep breath, Nightheart did her best to clear her mind. *Let's just focus on the task I have to face right now.*

"You okay?" Rabbitpaw questioned, Nightheart turned to look at the apprentice. "You seem distracted."

"I'm alright." Nightheart assured Rabbitpaw with a soft purr. "I'm just tired, is all. Didn't sleep well. I'm antsy to get into our new home."

"Me too." Rabbitpaw held her head high with sparkling green eyes. Nightheart felt better knowing she was excited. Rabbitpaw had started this whole journey scared and incredibly wary of everything around her, jumping at the slightest movement or noise but now Rabbitpaw seemed more confident in herself and her surroundings.

The Clans reached another river as well as the end of the moorland. On the other side of the river was another forest. This one was similar to SunClan's but the trees were taller, and it was less dense. The trees were scattered instead of packed together.

"That can't be LichenClan's territory, right?" Stumptail stepped forward, his eyes filled with concern. "It looks nothing like our old territory, it looks more like SunClan territory."

"I highly doubt we've seen everything." Pigeonpelt assured the young LichenClan warrior. "I'm sure there's much more to it than this. LichenClan has a perfect home just as the rest of us do. Let's

cross the river." There was a sturdy log that allowed easy crossing across the river. The patrol crossed and reached the other side without issue.

Nightheart looked around this new territory, she could see the mountains peaked farther into the forest here. They looked climbable, but Nightheart didn't know any cat that enjoyed climbing mountains.

"We should explore the mountains." Twigheart suggested. "Even if it's not LichenClan territory it could provide a gathering place."

"You really want to climb mountains every full moon?" Falconheart questioned skeptically. "I can't see Snakewhisker doing that."

"It won't hurt to check." Lilyclaw stepped in. "We need to explore everything." At Pigeonpelt's lead, and without any more arguments the patrol headed towards the mountains. Half the territory was forest, but the older half was completely stone.

Nightheart approached a cave at the base of the mountains. She gave it a sniff, it just smelled like dank stone. "I don't think there's anything else in there." After giving it a second sniff, she stepped inside. It was chilly and dark but it didn't go anywhere. "It's empty." Nightheart reported and stepped out back into the open air.

"Let's go up higher." Pigeonpelt suggested and stepped up onto a rocky path leading upwards. "It should be easy to get up this way." Tallsong and Rainpaw were quick behind him, climbing up the rocks. Nightheart didn't have any need or desire to climb those rocks, but she wasn't going to show any hesitation or fear.

She followed after the MoonClan cats and began climbing the rocks. They were somewhat unsteady and each trembling stone sent lightning straight to her heart, but despite her uneasy and unsettled stomach, Nightheart continued.

She could see the tails of the cats of ahead of her and watched carefully where they stepped so she wouldn't risk falling. Behind her, Nightheart could hear Rabbitpaw following her. She hoped that Rabbitpaw would be okay. Once they reached the top, Nightheart

was surprised at how exhausted she felt. Her muscles ached slightly and her paw pads felt raw.

At the top, NIghtheart looked around to see what they were dealing with. It almost looked like it could be a camp with various caves and some overgrown brush but Nightheart couldn't imagine a single cat in the forest who would want to live up here. The climb up was torturous enough.

"This doesn't look big enough for a gathering area." Flamepetal mewed once she reached the top, licking her paws. "And I'd hate to climb up here all the time.

"I agree." Tallsong nodded along. "I don't know if we could find any use for this territory. There doesn't seem to be any sign of a new moonstone either. Perhaps this could just be neutral territory."

"We'll have to discuss it with the leaders." Pigeonpelt looked around. "For now let's continue, we have to keep moving."

After a rigorous climb back down the side of the mountain, the patrol continued through this territory. It remaind relatively the same until the trees began to get more clustered. Nightheart imagined that in greenleaf the forest would've been incredibly lush and beautiful

"This is more like it." Brackenheart purred loudly as they reached the thicker forestry. "This looks like our hold home."

"I feel like there's even more trees here than our last territory." Stumptail looked like he had been filled with a newfound energy. Nightheart realized she had felt something similar when she had stepped into the pine forest.

"Now let's find a camp." Twigheart said with energy filling her mew. Following the energetic LichenClan warriors, Nightheart and the others traversed LichenClan's new territory.

Nightheart was looking around with interest, wondering how LichenClan could live like this. She liked the protection of the pine trees, but this seemed like way too much. The trees towered

overhead and she had seen LichenClan before when it was full of brush and undergrowth. It looked crowded and dangerous.

Just as Nightheart had that thought she felt her hind paw catch on a root sticking up out of the ground. Nightheart's front paws slipped in the snow in front of her and she landed directly on her face, his muzzle digging into the ground. Pain shot through her nose and Nightheart landed fully in the snow.

"Nightheart!" Nightheart heard Rabbitpaw's cry of alarm and heard her small pawsteps. Nightheart lifted her head and lifted her head, shaking away snow. She felt a sharp pain and smelled blood. "Your nose is bleeding."

"Are you alright?" Lilyclaw approached her. "That was quite the fall."

"I'm fine." Nightheart grumbled, feeling painfully embarrassed. Her nose hurt but she didn't expect it would last for very long. Her pelt burned and she felt like a bumbling apprentice, not a warrior. "Let's just keep moving."

After brief hesitation from her patrol mates, they continued moving through the forest and Nightheart was much more aware of her surroundings now. As they padded through the forest, Rabbitpaw moved close to her. "Are you alright? That looked like it hurt."

Nightheart nodded. "I'm just fine. The only thing badly damaged is my self-esteem." Nightheart chuckled, not wanting Rabbitpaw to be concerned.

"That's good." Rabbitpaw purred. "Your nose has already stopped bleeding." She pointed out. "Noses are always more sensitive in the cold."

Nightheart nodded along and looked forward. The patrol soon reached a plateau with trees towering over the ground. "Let's head up there." Brackenheart suggested and they climbed the semi-steep ground.

At the top there was a tree that stood above all the rest. At the

bottom was a huge crack that lead into the hollow tree. Nightheart thought it could easily be a den. Not far from the tree was two very large boulders that formed another den. "This looks perfect!" Twigheart mewed, spinning around the future camp and taking it in.

Brackenheart and Stumptail agreed and Nightheart left them to explore. She wished that she had her own camp to be excited for. It was already past sunhigh and likely that they wouldn't find AshClan's camp until dark. She just hoped they wouldn't have to wait another day.

After a long while of exploring the new LichenClan camp, they finally continued. It was getting darker with each step and Nightheart was getting colder. Her nose still hurt and she was getting more and more irritated.

They walked through the territory eventually finding the river once more. "Hey," Flamepetal spoke up. "What's over there?" She motioned with her head across the river. Nightheart and the rest of the patrol looked in her direction.

Across the river was a vast field but Nightheart could see five towering trees. "We should go check it out." Nightheart suggested. After an easy crossing of the river, the patrol hurried through the filled as the trees came into view.

Upon closer inspection, Nightheart realized they were in a hollow. The trees were surrounding a large boulder in the center. "This looks like it could be a gathering place." Pigeonpelt pointed out excitedly. "The Clans could settle around the trees while the leaders sit on the boulder."

"It seems perfect." Lilyclaw purred. "We'll have to tell the leaders about it!" For the first time in a while, Nightheart genuinely felt excited. The Clans had a place to gather, now all they needed was AshClan's camp and a new moonstone.

"I think there's more territory that way." Pigeonpelt glanced to a direction between LichenClan and AshClan territory. "We should see what's over there before we move on to AshClan territory. We're

almost done."

They continued forward, finding a small strip of bare forest territory and the river that slipped down from the mountain but Nightheart couldn't see an easy way to follow it. "This doesn't seem like much." Falconheart pointed out. "We should continue on to AshClan territory and find them a camp, we can find the moonstone another time."

"As much as I don't want to," Twigheart sighed. "Falconheart is right, we should move on before it gets too dark and cold."

The rest of the patrol agreed and they crossed back into AshClan's territory. Nightheart instantly felt comforted by the sweet scented pine trees. She breathed a sigh of relief. "Didn't Blackpaw say that the territory was at the base of the mountains?" Rabbitpaw questioned Nightheart.

She nodded. "We should walk along the mountains until we find it." Without waiting, the patrol continued along the mountains. After a short while of travelling, Nightheart spotted a raised platform of stone in the distance. She picked up her pace slightly, seeing more and more as they reached it. She could see a cave opening against the mountain. *Just like Blackpaw said!* She thought excitedly.

Nightheart hurried to the stone area, she could hear Rabbitpaw and Lilyclaw running up behind her. They reached it and it was exactly as Blackpaw had described to her. Along with the stone den was a small den formed by a large crack in the mountains.

She looked over all of the dens, they were perfect. She finally understood what the other cats had been feeling when they found their own camps. *We've finally found AshClan's new home!*

Chapter 23

Falconheart opened his eyes, taking in the early morning light. He sat up, letting out a heavy yawn. He looked around as the rest of the Clan cats were waking up. He and his patrol had returned the night before with the news they had brought back about the territories and today for the first time in over a moon the Clans would be splitting up. They had planned to take five days to work on building their camps then meet up and discuss borders.

Falconheart was incredibly excited to finally be around just his own Clanmates and not the three other Clans. He was also excited to start building SunClan's brand new camp. After finding it, Falconheart realized how much he missing living in a camp. He missed the scheduled patrols, the hunting with his Clanmates.

He was finally a warrior and he hadn't gone on any actual patrols other than exploring the territories, but he wanted to patrol his own territory and protect the border as an actual warrior. Soon he would finally have that moment, he would feel like a full SunClan warrior.

Falconheart waited patiently for the rest of the Clans to wake up, eagerly looking into the forest and trying to see SunClan in the distance. It was too far, but Falconheart could already see their new camp.

Once every cat was woken up the leaders gathered to talk. "I believe it's time for us all to go our separate ways." Dawnstar mewed. "We'll let the patrolling cats guide our way and meet up in five days. I wish all of you luck in building your new homes."

"I believe we'll be travelling with you for a little bit longer, Dawnstar." Shadowstar mewed kindly. "I'm glad we'll be sharing a border once again. Though it seems you'll be our only neighbors."

"That doesn't sound like a bad thing." Dawnstar purred in return as the two Clans began travelling again.

"If prey goes missing we'll know who took it." Violetfur teased, but her tone wasn't even slightly hostile.

"Well we promise not to steal any prey." Cinderflame chuckled. "I'd like to get to know our own territory before we try and explore yours." The two Clans shared a laugh and kept moving.

Falconheart and Flamepetal led the Clan as they crossed into SunClan's new territory. Falconheart kept quiet, just guiding the Clan alongside Flamepetal until they reached the turn towards the stone hollow. "It's this way." Flamepetal motioned with her tail.

"Well," Dawnstar faced Shadowstar. "Good luck with your camp, we'll see you all in five days."

"Good luck to you as well." Shadowstar dipped his head and continued padding through the forest until they vanished into the snowy trees. Meanwhile, Dawnstar turned and followed Flamepetal and Falconheart up towards the stone hollow.

"It's there." Falconheart mewed once the stone hollow came into view.

"It's certainly big." Lionclaw pointed out. "Looks like it could make a good home for us." He nuzzled Dawnstar and purred. "What do you think?"

"I think it's wonderful, and with some hard work it will be perfect." Dawnstar purred. "We should get started as soon as possible." SunClan climbed down into the hollow and took a good look around. "We should clear the snow out of the hollow as much as possible. We need to figure out the dens and start building them to be strong. Cinderflame will you start assigning duties?"

Cinderflame nodded. "I want the apprentices along with Briarrose, Flashtail, Earthpelt and Mudfall to find as much moss as you possibly can. Meanwhile, I want Redclaw, Brackenpelt, Heatherflight, Adderstrike and Snowtail out to collect brambles and other things to reinforce the dens.

"Icepetal, Turtleblaze, Applespots, Rosewind, Lionclaw and Rainears

go out and hunt as much prey as you can find. We'll set up more hunting patrols tomorrow but we need prey for tonight." Cinderflame continued, looking over her Clanmates. "And I want any cats I didn't name to remain in camp and help build and clean up. We need to get this place looking like home."

The Clans set to work right away, Falconheart worked alongside Cloudspots and Crowfur to start clearing up the snow near the future warrior's den and apprentice's den. Using their paws and tails, they shoved it to the sides to be carried out by another group of warriors.

When Redclaw's patrol returned Falconheart stopped clearing out the snow to start reinforcing the new dens. He started on the apprentice den, working with Adderstrike to shape it into a formidable den. They then started weaving the thick brambles into the bush.

"We need to make sure it can last through all the snow and rain." Adderstrike explained. He pushed Falconheart a long bramble and together they weaved it through the top of the den. They continued doing this until the entire den was formed. Falconheart pushed his paw against it.

"It's really sturdy." Falconheart mewed, feeling incredibly proud of his work. "Let's look on the inside." The two tom cats peered into the entrance of the cave, it was very roomy and looked quite comfortable. There were no gaps in the leaves or brambles that would prove to be warm once all the apprentices were inside and sleeping.

"It's smaller than the new den but it's bigger than the old den." Adderstrike pointed out. "It looks like a pretty good den, the apprentices will enjoy it." Falconheart and Adderstrike stepped back, looking over their handiwork. "Good work, Falconheart." Adderstrike dipped his head.

"Back at you." Falconheart said kindly. His paws were somewhat sore from some accidental brambles digging into his paws but his work made up for the minor pain. With a sigh of relief, Falconheart took a moment to look around at the rest of the camp. The warriors

den was nearly complete with Lionclaw, Applespots and Flashtail working hard on it.

The apprentices had returned with more than enough moss for the time being. It had spent the day lying in the warm sun to dry before it was handed out to the dens. Falconheart and Adderstrike went over to the pile of moss and grabbed enough to make the four nests for the apprentices.

Falconheart usually hated making nests, he hated doing it for the queens and Sandfoot when he was an apprentice but this time felt different. He was making the apprentice's first nests, he hoped they would enjoy them.

As Falconheart formed a nest with moss and bracken he looked around at the ones they had already made. A wave of sadness washed over him as he realized that there should be two more. *Pikepaw and Sorrelpaw should be here.* Falconheart thought sadly, he stared at the nest he was building with his paws. *I wish they could be.*

Falconheart finished up the nest sadly and looked over the four they had made. They were perfect and looked comfortable. He glanced outside of the den seeing the beautiful leaf-bare sunset. It was chilly and all of SunClan had been working for so long. They had made such amazing progress in one short day, but Falconheart knew there would be much more to do.

In the next few days they would be exploring the territory, learning where everything was and the best places to hunt. Falconheart felt like he was an apprentice again, exploring the territory for him to memorize. The ideal places for prey and training. He hoped that soon he would have his own apprentice and would be able to guide them around the new territory.

He hoped that he would be able to mentor one of Cherryleaf's kits when the time came, he knew they would be incredibly talented she-cats. Falconheart looked over the camp and breathed in with satisfaction. They were finally home, finally in place to call their own and stay.

There would be no more travelling, no more wondering when they would find their place. Cherryleaf's kits would grow up here and all future kits would be born here. Sedgepaw and the other apprentices would complete their training here. Taking a deep breath, Falconheart watched as his mother jumped on the large stone in the center of camp.

"Cats of SunClan!" She called. "After discussing with Cinderflame we've come to an agreement that this stone will serve as the new Clan meeting place. From now on all Clan meetings and ceremonies will be held right her. In honor of the SunTree back home, we've decided to call this the SunStone!"

The Clans cheered, Falconheart thought the SunStone was a perfect name for their new meeting place. He noticed during the day that the sun shined directly on top of the stone during sunhigh, just as the touch of the SunTree appeared to touch the sun back in their old camp.

"I want to say that I'm proud of all of you for working so hard on our new home and I'm even prouder that we made this journey. It was such a hard journey, we faced loss, pain and even new life." She nodded towards Cherryleaf who was putting her kits in the newly formed nursery along with Squirreltail. "But SunClan, along with all four Clans, prevailed and now we're in our new home. Soon we will find our new moonstone but for now I want you all to enjoy our new home."

The Clans cheered loudly for a long time until Dawnstar dismissed the Clan. Falconheart felt exhaustion weighing on his shoulders. He followed his Clanmates to the new warrior's den. He stepped inside, looking around. It was big and cozy. He picked out a nest and curled up, feeling the warmth of his fellow warriors surround him. This was his first night ever in the warrior's den, he wasn't surrounded by the other Clans, just his own Clanmates and for the first time since SunClan left, Falconheart felt at home.

Chapter 24

Warmth spread over Honeypaw, filling her heart with a strong sense of safety and hope. She opened her eyes, expecting to be in the new medicine cat den but she instead found herself in a beautiful garden. She looked around, surprised to see such beautiful, lush and vibrant flora. The flowers shimmered and in the center was a single flower in the shape of a star. *Where am I?* Honeypaw wondered, focusing harder on the garden.

She realized with a shock that she was in a cave, there was a circular opening above them. The full moon was above, shining brilliantly and providing light into the cave, making the flowers inside the garden glow. Honeypaw looked around, she felt a presence around her. She certainly wasn't alone in this cavern.

Honeypaw looked towards the entrance, she couldn't see the sky but she could hear the gentle bubbling of a river. She approached the entrance to the cave and realized that it led upwards. As Honeypaw climbed up the gentle sloping stone path until she could see the stars twinkling in the dark blue sky.

Finally, Honeypaw reached the top and looked around. She was high up on the mountain, there was a smooth stone path alongside the river leading down the mountain. At the top of the mountain Honeypaw could see the gathering place as well as each of the territories. "What is this?" Honeypaw whispered. Despite the warmth of the cave, the outside was still in full leaf-bare.

"This, Honeypaw," Honeypaw jumped, but soon recognized the sweet voice speaking behind her. She turned around and found herself looking into the bright green eyes of Honeywing. Excitement and joy flowed through Honeypaw's body, it had been so long since she had seen Honeywing! "Is the Spirit Garden."

"The Spirit Garden?" Honeypaw echoed. "What is that?"

Honeywing let out a soft, gentle chuckle. "The Spirit Garden is

where the Clans will communicate with StarClan. The medicine cats will meet here every half-moon and the leaders will get their nine lives here."

Honeypaw looked around, she half-expected to see the other medicine cats showed up but she remained alone. "Are the other medicine cats having this dream as well?"

Honeywing shook her head. "No, Honeypaw, it's just you." Honeywing explained. "StarClan agreed that we wanted you to tell the Clans of this place. You will tell them at the first gathering tomorrow night. Then on the night of the half-moon all the medicine cats will come here for the first time."

"But," Honeypaw looked at her paws, feeling hesitant. "Why me?" She turned her gaze back up to Honeywing. "Why me? Why am I the one who has to tell the Clans?"

"Because, Honeypaw." Honeywing sat down, casting her starry gaze over the mountains, watching the territories closely. "You have a destiny and it is time that you start living it. You are a medicine cat and it is your job to pass on news like this. Your destiny could go many ways, Honeypaw. I've watched you grow ever since you were born and I knew you were destined for greatness. Watching you grow into a sweet, compassionate and intelligent young medicine cat has made me so incredibly happy. You really are your mother's daughter, and I know she's just as proud of you as I am."

Honeypaw was unsure of what to say, she stared at the stars. She knew nothing of destiny or what to do, she wasn't sure what exactly Honeypaw meant. She just wanted to live a normal life, but she did know that being a medicine cat would bring the job of spreading StarClan's message. "Thank you, Honeywing." She said quietly. "I will tell the Clans about this place, but I don't know what I'm supposed to do about destiny."

"Don't focus too hard on it." Honeywing assured her. "You just focus on being you and living your life as the best medicine cat you can be." Honeywing rested her muzzle on Honeypaw's head, Honeypaw felt warm and safe despite the bitter night air. "Now return to your Clanmates and spread the news of StarClan."

Honeypaw shuffled her paws, feeling incredibly uncomfortable and nervous. Her stomach was churning. She sat in the cold, huddled near Pebblestep while they waited for the Clans to settle. Honeypaw lifted her head as she heard pawsteps getting closer to her, she turned her head to see Blackpaw and Skyfeather nearing them with Riverstar and Ashblaze.

"Good evening." Skyfeather dipped his head towards Honeypaw and Pebblestep as well as Roseheart, Oneflight and Ravenheart who were sitting nearby. The leaders had earlier agreed that the medicine cats and deputies would sit at the base of the rock in the center during the gathering.

"How has it been settling in your new camps?" Roseheart questioned. "It's been going great for LichenClan. I've already found more herbs."

"So have we." Skyfeather said, for the first time in moons Skyfeather didn't look overwhelmed with stress. "It's been wonderful getting settled in to our brand new camp."

"I agree." Ravenheart purred. "MoonClan camp is so beautiful and already feels like home."

"You okay, Honeypaw?" Honeypaw jumped when she realized Oneflight was talking to her. "You look shaken up."

"I'm not." Honeypaw sat up straight, trying to settle her shaky mew.

"Honeypaw has some news for the Clans tonight," Pebblestep took a step forward. "She's just nervous." Honeypaw glanced gratefully at her mentor. She had already told Pebblestep and Dawnstar about her dream with Honeypaw and now Dawnstar would announce it to the rest of the Clans.

"What is the news?" Roseheart asked with interest. "Must be important."

"You can tell them." Pebblestep nudged Honeypaw. She didn't want to but Honeypaw knew that she had to.

"Honeywing came to me in a dream last night. It was the first time I

had seen her in moons. She showed me where we can communicate with StarClan."

All of the medicine cat's eyes went wide and their jaws dropped. "Are you serious?" Ravenheart said in shock. "Honeypaw, that's incredible! Where is it?"

"Between AshClan and LichenClan territory, if you follow a path beside the river you'll find a cave. Inside is this beautiful garden, Honeywing called it the Spirit Garden. Even with the cold it is still full of beautiful flowers." Honeypaw explained exactly what she had seen in her ream. "It's incredible."

Honeypaw found Blackpaw looking at her with amazement in his icy blue eyes, her pelt burned slightly. "I wonder why they chose Honeypaw of all cats." Skyfeather wondered, then quickly spoke again. "Not that there's anything wrong with you, Honeypaw, but I'm just curious."

"StarClan has their reasons." Ravenheart purred kindly. "Clearly they have faith in Honeypaw and we should too." Honeypaw felt incredibly moved by Ravenheart's kinds words. MoonClan's old medicine cat was incredibly kind.

"The gathering is starting!" Oneflight pointed out and the medicine cats quieted down.

"I'd like to start this gathering off." Dawnstar spoke up as the leader's got ready on top of the rock. They sat close together but it looked spacious enough for even one more cat. "I bring incredibly important news that all the Clans need to hear."

"Very well, Dawnstar." Riverstar dipped her head. "Let's hear it then."

"Last night, Honeypaw had a dream from StarClan. Honeywing showed her a place she called the Spirit Garden which will serve as our meeting place with StarClan." Mews of shock and surprise spread through the Clans, along with some mutters of disbelief.

"Is that so?" Shadowstar looked down at Honeypaw, she could feel

every eye in the forest looking at her. She wanted to curl up in a ball and fade away, but Honeypaw kept her head high.

"It is." Honeypaw mewed, trying to project her voice.

"Speak up!" Honeypaw winced as she heard a cry from Cloverstrike of AshClan.

Honeypaw cleared her throat and mewed louder. "It is. Honeywing showed me this place last night. If you follow the path beside the river into the mountains between AshClan and LichenClan territory you'll find a cave that leads to the Spirit Garden."

"Should we trust such a young apprentice?" A voice spoke up, cutting at Honeypaw's confidence even more.

"Why did StarClan entrust this knowledge with an apprentice, the youngest medicine cat we have? Why not Ravenheart or even Pebblestep?"

Honeypaw trembled, she flattened her ears and avoided all the gazes of the cats around her. She felt Pebblestep rest her tail on Honeypaw's shoulders. The gray and white medicine cat stood up. "My apprentice has proven time and time again to be a competent and reliable medicine cat. She is kind and I see no reason why StarClan wouldn't pass this knowledge on to her."

"I agree." Skyfeather stood up as well. "I've had the pleasure of working with Honeypaw during this journey and she has as much knowledge as any of us, even with her young age." Honeypaw stared in shock as the other medicine cats spoke up for her. Her eyes stuck to Blackpaw as he stood up, icy blue eyes shining in the moonlight.

"When Honeypaw was captured by Hornet and his rogues she stayed strong and brave despite knowing she might die. She's one of the most reliable cats I've ever met. I believe in her."

Honeypaw stared at Blackpaw, for some reason over all the complaints that had been given to her in that moment, his meant the most. "Thank you." She mouthed to him, his eyes filled with a

gentle kindness that made her heart race and he nodded.

"I say we trust Honeypaw." Riverstar mewed.

"Tomorrow," Timbertail stood up. "I will travel to where Honeypaw says and receive my nine lives. We will truly see then if it's where we're meant to be.

"I hope you recieve your nine lives without issue." Shadowstar purred. "You'll be a fantastic leader, Timbertail."

"It will be an honor to call you Timberstar." Dawnstar brushed her tail across his pelt and the other leaders agreed. The Clans relaxed and Honeypaw felt relieved when the Clans started sharing news of their new Clans and Honeypaw was no longer the center of attention.

While the leader's spoke, Honeypaw looked at Blackpaw who was looking at her in return. She felt herself purring and edged closer to him. She didn't realize until right now how much she missed being around him all the time. Honeypaw took a deep breath and closed her eyes. She felt so genuinely happy, and she never wanted it go away.

Chapter 25

"They're growing so fast!" Honeypaw purred, watching Bluekit, Windkit and Snowkit climb over their mother.

"I know." Cherryleaf purred. "It seems like just yesterday they were born." She flicked her tail as Snowkit pounced on it and dug her tiny little claws into it. "They'll be eating fresh-kill soon too."

"Exciting." Honeypaw purred. She caught the attention of Windkit who stumbled over Cherryleaf's paw.

"You're a medicine cat, right?" Windkit squeaked, her deep blue eyes sparkling with curiosity.

"I am." Honeypaw looked down at the tiny kit.

"What do medicine cats do?" Windkit tilted her head.

"Well," Honeypaw sat down, Bluekit's and Snowkit's attention had been grabbed as well. "Pebblestep and I use herbs to treat sickness or injuries. When your mother had you we gave her herbs to keep her strength up and give you milk. We also communicate with StarClan and provide messages to Dawnstar."

"Speaking of," Cherryleaf mewed. "Isn't tonight the half-moon?" She questioned.

Honeypaw nodded. "It's the first time we'll all be going to the Spirit Garden. We're all excited."

"Aren't you the only one who has seen it?" Squirreltail spoke up from the other side of the nursery.

"I've only seen it in my dream, and I'm pretty sure Roseheart has seen it. Timbertail said he was going to get his nine lives the night after the gathering." Honeypaw explained. "But I'm still really excited to see if it's as beautiful as it was in my dream."

"I want to see it!" Bluekit jumped up. "Will I ever get to see the Spirit Garden?"

"Well," Cherryleaf wrapped her tail around her three daughters. "If we hold the old tradition, you'll see it during your apprenticeship."

"When will we become apprentices?"Snowkit asked her mew in a half-whine. "I want to see it too!"

"You still have about five moons to wait." Cherryleaf purred. "But I promise it will come in the blink of an eye."

The kits seemed satisfied and Honeypaw let out a purr. "Well I should go get prepared for the half-moon, it's a long ways away." She dipped her head and let the queens rest and the kits play. Honeypaw made the short walk from the nursery to the medicine cat den. They had been in this hollow for half a moon now and it was already feeling like home.

The medicine den was full of nests for any sick or injured cats they might deal with. They kept their herbs in a safe little crack in the wall that was big enough for an entire forest of herbs. Herbs were still scarce due to leaf-bare but they had managed to find a little bit, more than they had gotten back in their old home. Honeypaw knew that once newleaf came around they would be stocked up on herbs completely.

"Are you ready to go?" Pebblestep asked Honeypaw once she stepped inside.

"Incredibly so." Honeypaw purred. "I haven't been able to get this place out of my head since I dreamed of it."

"I hope it is as beautiful as you described it." Pebblestep moved across the den, taking one last look to make sure it was tidied. "Let's get going, SunClan has the farthest to travel so we should leave as soon as we can."

"Sounds good." Honeypaw walked beside her mentor as they left camp. It was just before sunset and Honeypaw hoped they would be there in time, if not earlier. Honeypaw had spent time exploring

SunClan's brand new territory and she was already starting to learn it. She wanted to memorize everything about it, and she couldn't wait to see the forest in full bloom in newleaf and greenleaf.

The used the stepping stones to cross the river towards the gathering hollow, it was a little strange to see a brand new gathering hollow especially with five trees instead of four but it was much bigger than the old one.

"Wait up!" Honeypaw and Pebblestep stopped walking once they heard the voice of Oneflight. They looked behind them to see Oneflight and Ravenheart steadily making their way over to Pebblestep and Honeypaw.

"Good evening." Pebblestep dipped her head respectfully to the two of them. "How has life in your new territory been going?"

"Pretty good." Ravenheart replied. "It's been such a fun time exploring and learning where all the herbs are. I feel like an apprentice again." Honeypaw purred, Ravenheart was far from an apprentice, but it must be nice to feel young again. Ravenheart was thin, his black pelt was laced with white and gray but his green eyes were filled with the light and energy of a kit.

"We should hurry and get going." Oneflight urged, clearly in a hurry. "I don't mean to rush, but I really want to see this place. It's been so long since I've been able to talk with StarClan."

"I know you're in a rush, Oneflight." Ravenheart nudged his apprentice. "But the Spirit Garden will be there for a long time, so will StarClan." He chuckled. "But I won't be, so let's get moving!"

Pebblestep and Honeypaw laughed and the four medicine cats kept on walking. They crossed the gathering hollow and were approaching the mountains quickly. Honeypaw watched the stream climb back up the mountain and her eyes followed it to the top, she couldn't see the cavern but she knew it was there.

At the base of the river Honeypaw spotted Roseheart, Skyfeather and Blackpaw. Her heart skipped a beat when she saw Blackpaw. She looked over herself, making sure that her pelt was smooth. *Why*

am I fussing over myself? She wondered and quickly stopped before someone noticed her.

"Hello there!" Roseheart called, sounding particularly excited. "Good evening to you all!" The LichenClan she-cat jumped up with sparkling green eyes.

"You're certainly lively tonight." Ravenheart mewed, his voice entertained.

"That's because Timberstar received his nine lives! He's officially the leader of LichenClan and Larkclaw is his deputy." Roseheart explained ecstatically.

"That's incredible news!" Pebblestep approached the ginger she-cat and nuzzled her cheek. "I'll have to let Dawnstar know."

"We should get moving." Skyfeather mewed, sounding impatient but not irritated. Honeypaw and the other medicine cats agreed. The stepped across the small river and found the smooth stone path leading up the mountain. Honeypaw stepped onto the smooth path, it was cold but felt natural. With every step, Honeypaw felt like she was being guided up the path. She could almost hear the whispers of StarClan cats in her ears.

"Do you feel that?" Ravenheart questioned, his voice in a hushed whisper. "It's like I can hear the voices of StarClan all around me."

"I do feel it." Pebblestep breathed out quietly, sounding hopefully and filled with hope.

Honeypaw and her fellow medicine cats finally found the cavern at the top. Honeypaw vividly remembered her dream with Honeywing, they had been sitting right here and looking over the territories. *She was talking about destiny, I still don't know what I should be doing but I know I'll have her to guide me.*

They reached the cavern and Honeypaw could tell the other medicine cats were nervous, with the exception of Roseheart. "Let's go." Skyfeather pushed forward and they stepped into the cavern's entrance. Honeypaw walked behind Pebblestep, recalling her dream

as they padded farther down into the cavern.

She could smell the sweet scent of the flowers and the warmth inside. It would be moonhigh soon and perfect time to speak with StarClan. She was so eager to see everything in real life. It didn't take long for the cavern to open up and their paws to reach soft grass. The medicine cats around her dropped their jaws when they saw the beautiful garden.

"It's breathtaking." Pebblestep whispered. "I've never seen anything like it." She looked around, the moonlight was shining perfectly onto the large, star-shaped flower in the center.

"It really is incredible." Oneflight said quietly.

"Before we begin," Pebblestep spoke up. "There's something I've been wanting to do for a while now, and this is the perfect time." Honeypaw looked at her mentor with confusion. What did Pebblestep need to do and why didn't she tell Honeypaw about it? Pebblestep stood in front of Honeypaw and looked at her with shimmering blue eyes. Her silver and white pelt glowed in the moonlight. "Honeypaw," she spoke up, Honeypaw glanced around, still incredibly confused. "You have proven through this entire journey to be an amazing medicine cat. When you were captured by violent, murderous rogues and then you were chosen by StarClan to show us this beautiful place."

"What is happening?" Honeypaw questioned her mentor.

"Honeypaw, I believe that you are more than ready to receive your true medicine cat name." Honeypaw's eyes widened and her jaw dropped. This was the last thing she had been expecting. "I will always give you my guidance, but you are ready to become a full medicine cat."

"I agree with Pebblestep." Ravenheart purred. "I've been thinking it's time as well." The other medicine cats nodded along, Honeypaw met Blackpaw's icy gaze for just a moment before turning back to Pebblestep.

"Are you ready?" Pebblestep questioned, Honeypaw wasn't sure if

she was but she found herself nodding along. Pebblestep's eyes shimmered and she raised her voice. "I, Pebblestep, medicine cat of SunClan, call upon my warrior ancestors to look down on this apprentice, she has trained long and hard to understand the ways of a medicine cat, and with your help she will serve her Clan for many moons." Honeypaw felt the eyes of all of the medicine cats on her, but she also felt the presence of many other cats.

"Honeypaw, do you promise to uphold the ways of a medicine cat, to stand apart from rivalry between Clan and Clan and to protect all cats equally, even at the cost of your life?"

Honeypaw thought for just a moment, ever since she was a kit she had wanted nothing more than to serve her Clan. To heal them, to guide them and to protect them. Not with claws and teeth, but with herbs and knowledge. After many moons of training, and many more to come, Honeypaw truly felt in her heart that she was ready to be a full medicine cat. "I do." She spoke with the most confidence she had ever felt.

Pebblestep's blue eyes shimmered. "Then by the powers of StarClan I give you your true name as a medicine cat. Honeypaw, from this moment forward you will be known as Honeyfrost. StarClan honors your intelligence and compassion, and we welcome you as a full medicine cat of StarClan!"

Pebblestep rested her muzzle on Honeyfrost's head, she could hear her mentor purring loudly and she couldn't help but do the same. Pebblestep moved backwards and Honeyfrost licked her mentor's shoulder.

"Honeyfrost! Honeyfrost!" The medicine cats cheered for her, Honeyfrost felt warm and loved from all of her fellow medicine cats. She couldn't wait to share the news with her Clanmates!

"It's quite funny that you chose to have her ceremony tonight." Skyfeather mewed, stepping forward.

"Why is that?" Pebblestep turned to the AshClan medicine cat.

"Because I too have a ceremony to perform." Skyfeather glanced at

Blackpaw with pride in his eyes. Blackpaw seemed completely blindsided.

"Wait, what?" Blackpaw flattened his ears, eyes darting around as he realized what was happening.

"You too have proven to be a more than capable medicine cat. I had a time of weakness these last few moons and you never once gave up on me or your Clan. AshClan is lucky to have you as a medicine cat and I am proud to call you my apprentice and I'll be even prouder to have you as my fellow medicine cat." Blackpaw appeared to be speechless, but his icy blue eyes filled with admiration and respect for his mentor. "I, Skyfeather, medicine cat of AshClan call upon my warrior ancestors to look down on this apprentices. He has trained long and hard to understand the ways of a medicine cat and with your help, he will serve his Clan for many moons." Skyfeather watched Blackpaw who seemed to be more confident with the situation. Honeyfrost knew exactly what he was feeling.

"Blackpaw, do you promise to uphold ways of a medicine cat, to stand apart from rivalry between Clan and Clan and to protect all cats equally, even at the cost of your life?" Skyfeather and Blackpaw held a steady, powerful gaze.

"I do." Blackpaw's voice was bold and full of confidence. Honeyfrost felt a surge of admiration for him. *He really is ready for this, maybe even more than I am.*

"Then by the powers of StarClan I give you your true name as a medicine cat. Blackpaw, from this moment forward you will be known as Blackstorm. StarClan honors your patience and commitment to your Clan and we welcome you as a full medicine cat of AshClan!"

Skyfeather touched his muzzle to Blackstorm's forehead and Blackstorm licked his shoulder, the two AshClan medicine cats looked at each other for a long moment with mutual respect. "Blackstorm! Blackstorm!" The medicine cats cheered once more, Honeyfrost made sure that Blackstorm could hear her.

"I'm so happy that we have two amazing new medicine cats." Ravenheart purred. "It's been an honor working with each and every one of you."

Honeyfrost watched her fellow medicine cats lay down in the soft grass, all eager to speak with StarClan once again. Honeyfrost met Blackstorm's gaze, feeling her heart race. She felt the magic of this garden surround her, everything had changed since she became a medicine cat apprentice and now she realized that she was truly home.

Keep reading for an extra story! Find out how Garnet, a gentle hearted kittypet meets the ambitious and violent rogue, Hornet.

Extra 1

Garnet heard the sound of her front door closing. Her ears twitched and Garnet lifted her head up. Her housefolk must have left for the day. She was never quite sure where they went, but as long as they came back she didn't mind. Them being gone allowed Garnet time to herself and time to spend outside. She approached the window in her housefolk's kit's bedroom. She jumped onto the windowsill and pushed her way through the already broken mesh.

She breathed in the fresh summer air and looked around. The house next to hers was home to an elderly cat named Blue. He was blind but he was also Garnet's best friend. She jumped from the window to the tall elm tree in her yard. She climbed up the twisting branches and glanced into Blue's yard.

The tom was sunning himself in his favorite spot, the middle of his housefolk's garden in the direct line of sunbeams. "Good morning, Blue!" Garnet called and jumped down from the tree and into his yard.

"Good morning, Garnet." Blue responded, twitching his ears and keeping his eyes closed. "How was your night?"

"Same as usual." Garnet sat outside of the garden, washing her paws. "Ate some good food and slept."

Blue nodded. "I heard talk of a new kittypet in town." He explained. "He's just a little kit, the housefolk next to Juniper brought him home yesterday."

Garnet twitched her whiskers, she always enjoyed welcoming new kittypets into their small community, especially the kits. "I'll have to go welcome this new kit. Juniper is nice but she's just a kit herself."

"Just be careful." Blue yawned, resting his chin on his forepaws. "You know that dog over there hates cats."

"I'll be okay." Garnet purred, assuring the old blue tom. "I know how to handle dogs." She stood up and jumped up onto the fence. "I'll be back before my housefolk get home!" Garnet bid farewell to Blue and walked along the white fence. She could hear the sound of housefolk kits playing, dogs barking and birds chirping. It was such a lovely day but Garnet couldn't help but notice dark clouds creeping in on the clear blue sky.

She watched the clouds for just a moment, trying to judge if she would be caught in the rain or not. *I'll be fine.* Garnet told herself and continued her walk. She padded confidently through the town. She had been born here and spent every day of her life here, she knew it like the back of her paw.

Juniper's house was a small green house and beside it was a dark red house. Garnet assumed that they were the house that adopted the new kit because the blue house was the house with the aggressive and annoying dog.

Garnet sniffed the air, making sure that the terrible dog wasn't anywhere near her and quickly crossed it's yard to Juniper's yard. She spotted the small red-brown she-cat talking with a black tabby tom. "Garnet!" Juniper cried out when she spotted her. "Come here and meet the new kittypet!" Garnet jumped down into Juniper's yard and approached the two kittypets. The tom looked slightly skittish, but had wide and bright blue eyes. "Garnet, this Night. Night this is Garnet, she loves on the other side of town."

"Nice to meet you." Garnet dipped her head kindly to the young kittypet. "Welcome to our little town. Most of the cats are pretty nice around here. Harper has a bit of an attitude problem, but she's all hiss."

"Cool." Night squeaked. "Thank you. I was born in the next town over. I had two siblings but they went to two different homes. I was scared I wouldn't meet any nice cats around here, there was a nasty old tom who lived next to me."

"Well the cats around here are pretty kind." Garnet purred. "I live next to an old tom named Blue who is very kind, and there's another told tom who lives on the edge of town named Harvey, he's

also incredibly kind."

"When I'm bigger I'll have to go see them!" Night puffed out his chest. "But for now I don't think I'll be wandering any farther than Juniper's yard.

"If you need anyone to show you around just let me know." Garnet offered. "I know this town better than any cat around, except maybe Harvey but he's too old to be travelling around."

"Thanks." Night purred. "I'd love that."

Garnet looked up at the sky, the storm clouds were inching in closer and closer by the second. She let out a small sigh. "Well, I should get home. I don't want to get caught in this storm."

"It was nice to meet you, Garnet." Night said cheerfully.

"You as well, Night." Garnet stood up and looked around. "I'll see you around, Juniper." Garnet jumped up onto Juniper's fence and began walking along it to head home. As she walked she heard heavy pawsteps running from the other side. She realized with alarm that she was near the dog's fence.

The large black and brown dog slammed up against the fence. Garnet lost her balance and her paws slipped off the fence, she unsheated her claws and dug them into the fence. She hung off the side, dangling just above the dog's hungry teeth. Her stomach did flips as she tried to pull herself up.

The dog barked loudly, jumping around and slamming its body against the fence. Garnet's claws couldn't hold her much longer and with another slam from the dog her claws were ripped from the wood and she fell into the yard, landing painfully on her back. Garnet didn't have much time to act, she jumped to her paws and sprinted away from the dog, but it was hot on her heels.

She looked around for a tree but couldn't find any of them. She heard a creak and glanced towards the front of the yard where the dog's housefolk were walking in through their gate. Picking up her pace, Garnet ran towards them. She swerved between their legs and

out of the yard. She thought she was home free but the dog shoved past it's housefolk and continued its chase of Garnet.

The housefolk called for the dog but it didn't react and it definitely didn't stop. Garnet ran as fast as she could but the dog was also incredibly fast. She could hear it's pawsteps and barking.

As Garnet ran she could see a road in the distance with the cars approaching fast. *I can't stop!* Garnet pushed herself to run faster, her paws hit the hot, rough stone and she began darting across the road. A car approached quickly, coming directly at Garnet. She let out a cry and skidded to a stop, feeling the flesh on her paw pads get shredded. The car screeched to a stop and Garnet flattened her ears.

She glanced over her shoulder and saw the dog running for her, letting out a hiss, Garnet continued running, making it to the other side of the road. She reached a strange section of ground made from wood, she didn't have time to guess what it was, she just ran towards it.

As Garnet's paws touched the wood, it broke out from under her weight and she tumbled downwards. Garnet cried out as she fell, she struggled to land on her feet as her paws hit semi-deep water. Pain shot through her paws and Garnet fell to her side, making a splash of dirty water.

The water was slimy and smelled horrid. She wrinkled her nose and stood up, looking towards the hole, the dog poked its head down and barked loudly. Garnet flattened herself to the ground, the water going up to her shoulders, but the dog didn't look like it would follow Garnet down here.

After a few moments, the dog turned away and left Garnet alone. For a split second, Garnet was relieved but she soon realized that she still had a mountain of problems to deal with. She was stuck in a disgusting hole with no idea of how to get out. Her ears twitched as she heard a low rumble of thunder overhead. With a heavy sigh, Garnet looked around. She could see a tunnel that lead away from where she had been running.

She didn't want to walk away from her home, but she didn't have much choice. Swallowing her fears, Garnet followed the tunnel, walking through the mucky water. She had to find a decent way to wash herself before returning home, her housefolk would think she was some disgusting wild cat.

Garnet walked for a long time, she wished she could see the sun instead of being trapped in a small, disgusting tunnel. Her stomach was starting to growl, she hadn't eaten since this morning and it had been nearly sunhigh when she reached Night and Juniper, she had no idea what time it was now.

After what seemed like years of walking, Garnet could smell rain. She picked up her pace until she was nearly running and found the end of the tunnel. She climbed out of the disgusting place and looked around. Her heart dropped when she realized she had no idea where she was. Garnet flattened her ears, it was already nighttime and pouring rain. Garnet quickly ducked back in the tunnels, she wouldn't be getting home tonight.

Garnet curled up on a flat piece of rock, tucking her nose under her tail. She smelled horrible, she was cold and lonely. She closed her eyes, trying to focus on getting home, she would be back in her warm house tomorrow night with her housefolk and her soft blankets. *I just have to hold on for tonight...*

Extra 2

Garnet opened her eyes, she was shivering and her pelt was filthy and matted. She lifted her head, she hadn't slept very well and her paws were raw. She was exhausted and still incredibly scared. Garnet sat up and tried washing her disgusting pelt but she couldn't stomach the taste. She would have to find a river or something to wash herself. Garnet stood up and climbed out of the tunnel, looking around.

The sky was a pale gray and the ground soaked from the rainstorm the night before. The air was frigid and she shivered as the wind ruffled her ginger fur. Garnet climbed to the top of the hill and glanced around. She could see her town in the distance but it was incredibly far away. She knew her way through the town but she didn't know how long it would take for her to reach it.

What if my housefolk think I'm dead? Or injured? Garnet tried to calm her fears, she needed not to think about that, she just needed to get home. Bracing the cold, Garnet started heading straight towards the twolegplace.

She walked through the wet field, getting more and more annoyed with each burr and dead leaf that got caught in her already tangled fur. She wished that she was back home in her warm house. She never wanted to leave her home again.

Garnet came to a stop as she heard the sound of pawsteps around her, she looked around, her fur standing on edge. She heard the pawsteps inching closing until two cats stepped out of the tall grass. A gray spotted tom and a jet black she-cat circled around Garnet "Look what we have here, Jade." Sneered the gray tom. "A lost kittypet."

"You're a long way from home, aren't you kittypet?" The black she-cat, Jade, hissed.

"I live in that town over there." Garnet flattened her ears, stepping

away from the cats. They radiated danger, Garnet knew how to fight but she wasn't sure she could take on two rogues. "I don't want any trouble."

"Well you see, kittypet." The tom stepped closer to her, his claws unsheathed. "You're in *our* territory. You came asking for trouble the moment you stepped your little paws here."

"I didn't mean to come over here, I'm heading home now." Garnet had a feeling that these cats wouldn't listen to her. She feared for her safety, and she wasn't sure if she could outrun these two.

"I think we should send her home with some reminders." Jade chuckled. "So the other kittypets know to stay away."

Without warning, the tom jumped forward. Garnet didn't have any time to react as she was tackled to the ground. She let out a hiss and battered at his gray pelt. She felt her claws tearing at his fur. She bit down as hard as he could into his flesh, she tasted his blood and nearly gagged.

The tom picked her up by the shoulder and threw her across the field. Garnet rolled through the damp grass, rocks stabbing into her body. Jade ran at her and pinned her to the ground. Garnet spat in her face and raked her claws across Jade's belly. The she-cat hissed in pain and lashed at Garnet's face.

Garnet turned her head, narrowly avoiding Jade's claws. She pushed her hind paws and deep as she could into Jade's belly. The black she-cat let out a sharp gasp of breath and stood up on her hind legs, getting away from Garnet.

"Help me, Adder!" Jade hissed and the spotted tom rushed to her side. Garnet jumped to her paws and faced the two of them. "You asked for it, kittypet!" The two of them charged at Garnet, she dropped to the floor to avoid being tackled and spun around, hissing as she leapt forward. She landed on Adder's shoulders and raked her claws down his spine.

Adder bucked, kicking his hind legs into the air and causing Garnet to lose her balance. She fell off of his back and landed hard on her

stomach, the air rushing out of her body. She took a second to breath, but she felt a weight on her back. Jade's claws sunk into her shoulders and she felt them ripping through her pelt.

"That's quite enough!" A new voice rang out through the field and Garnet felt Jade lift her paws from Garnet's shoulders. Garnet sat up, her body aching. She looked around and found that another cat had approached. She saw the cat and felt her heartbeat pick up a little.

It was a large golden brown tabby tom, he had striking black tabby stripes and fierce amber eyes that burned like the sun. Garnet felt almost hypnotized by them, she looked around and saw that Adder and Jade looked incredibly nervous. "Honestly, you two." The tabby stared down the other two rogues. "I thought you were at least skilled enough to take on a kittypet." The tom rested his eyes on Garnet, she felt like he was staring directly into her soul. "Or maybe, this kittypet is stronger than she looks."

He approached her, looking Garnet over with interest. "Adder, Jade, why don't you two head home? I'll see that this kittypet is dealt with." Unlike Adder and Jade, Garnet didn't feel threatened by his words, she almost felt enamored. After Adder and Jade left with a few mumbles to themselves, Hornet walked around Garnet. "I've never seen a kittypet fight like you before."

Garnet swallowed her nerves, forcing herself to speak. "I was taught by the cat who lives next to me, he lived as a loner for a while."

"I see." His voice was like honey. "What's your name, kittypet? Unless you prefer being called that."

"My name is Garnet."

"Beautiful name," His eyes sparkled. "My name is Hornet. I apologize for Jade and Adder, they were only doing what they were told."

"What do you mean what they were told?" Garnet tilted her head. "Attacking random kittypets?"

Hornet laughed. "No, we have a camp near here with some other rogues. We don't like kittypets or loners wandering around here so we send them on their way. Usually they just run away but you stuck and fought two wild cats. It was quite impressive, I don't see a lot of rogues who can fight like you, let alone kittypets."

Garnet's pelt burned hotter than the sun, she struggled to speak. "Well, uh thanks I guess." She stood up, trying to avoid his intense gaze. "I should head home, though."

"Of course." Hornet looked over his shoulder at the town. "How'd you end up here anyway? Curiosity?"

Garnet shook her head. "I was visiting some friends when I was chased by a dog. I fell down a hole and it led me to this field." She suddenly felt self-conscious about her filthy pelt.

"Would you like it if I walked you home? I know you can protect yourself but there's other rogues around here that might rough you up, but if you're with me then they won't mess with you."

"Oh," Garnet looked at her paws. "It's fine really, I'm sure you have other things to do."

"It would be my pleasure." Hornet approached her. "I insist."

"O-Okay." Garnet really didn't have it in her to deny him, so she finally agreed and the two of them started walking.

"I know a place where you could wash yourself too." Hornet mewed. "I'd assume you'd want to wash off all that muck."

"Uh," Garnet's pelt burned even hotter. "Yeah, sorry about that."

"Don't be." Hornet assured her, but she still felt incredibly self-conscious. They soon reached a small stream that lead around the town. Garnet stepped inside, the water was freezing but it felt amazing to have the filth washed away. She stayed in the stream until her pelt was completely clean.

She stepped out of the stream and shook the water from her pelt and took a moment to lick herself dry. When she was finished she

noticed Hornet looked at her with a strange look in his eyes. She looked away. "I-I'm ready to go whenever." She mumbled. She heard a slight chuckle from Hornet and he stood up.

She walked beside him towards the town, and noticed that he would take a few steps closer to her every so often. Everytime his pelt brushed against hers she felt sparks spread throughout her entire body. They finally reached the outskirts of the town and Garnet faced Hornet.

"I can make it from here." Garnet told him. "Thank you for walking me here."

"My pleasure." Hornet purred. "But before you go," He looked around. "I would like to ask you something."

"Yes?" Garnet blinked, her heart racing in her chest, it was so fast that Garnet was worried that he might hear it.

"I was wondering if you'd like to meet up again sometime?" Hornet questioned, locking his amber gaze with hers.

Garnet's heart froze, she hadn't been expecting. "Uh, sure." She swallowed, struggling to speak. "Just meet me here, I guess. Why do you want to meet with me?" She blurted out.

"Because you're unlike any cat I've ever met." Hornet explained, his eyes glowing. "And I want to get to know you."

Garnet didn't know what to say, her heart pounded painfully in her chest and her stomach filled with butterflies. "I-I would like that too." She said, her voice shaking. "I'll see you tomorrow?" Garnet suggested.

"I'll see you then." With that, Hornet turned away and Garnet felt her paws frozen to the ground. Her heart pounded in her ears and she was already longing for tomorrow. Finally forcing herself to move, Garnet turned and headed into town.

She walked with her head in the clouds, thinking of Hornet until she reached home at dusk. Garnet jumped onto the fence and looked into her yard. She stood on the fence before jumping down,

she looked at her house for a long moment then back over her shoulder. She had been longing for home all night, but now she wasn't sure.

"Garnet? Is that you?" Garnet recognized the raspy voice of Blue. She looked into his yard and saw the tom standing in his yard. "Where have you been? I've been worried."

"Sorry, Blue." She apologized. "I got chased out of town and got lost.

"Well, I'm glad you're home safe. I know that your housefolk will be glad to see you."

"Yeah..." Garnet stared at her paws.

"Everything okay?" Blue questioned with concern lining his mew.

"Yeah," Garnet lifted her voice. "Just tired is all, I've had a long day. I'm going to get some sleep."

Garnet jumped onto her tree and climbed into the bedroom. Suddenly the house felt suffocating, feeling trapped, Garnet curled up on her blankets. She closed her eyes, hoping this feeling would go away, but part of her knew that it wouldn't. Despite everything, Garnet fell into a gentle sleep.

Extra 3

"This is my favorite kind of prey." Hornet pushed a squirrel towards Garnet. "I can't believe you've never tried it before.

"Well when you spend your entire life as a kittypet, you don't really get access to his kind of food." Garnet chuckled and took a bite of the squirrel. Her mouth watered as she ate the small creature, it was so much tastier than anything her housefolk had ever given her. "It's amazing!" Garnet exclaimed and continued eating it while Hornet watched and purred.

"I'm glad you enjoy it." Garnet looked up, meeting his amber gaze. Her heart raced just as much as it did the day she met him. They had been visiting with each other for over a moon and Garnet hadn't been happier.

She glanced up towards the sky, the sun was starting to set. She let out a long sigh. "I should probably head home soon."

"Do you have to?" Hornet asked, sounding incredibly downtrodden. "Why don't you come home with me? At least for the night."

"I don't know." Garnet flattened her ears. "My housefolk were so upset when I was gone that time I met you." She turned away. "I don't want them to worry."

"Garnet," Hornet ran around to stand in front of her, preventing her from walking away. "This is no way for a cat to live. You shouldn't have to worry about going home, you should have the freedom to go where you please."

"Hornet I--"

"Garnet, just listen to me." He cut her off. "You have the heart of a wild cat, you don't belong trapped with housefolk. You belong in the wild!" He stepped even closer, his muzzle nearly brushing hers. Garnet's heart raced faster than ever. "You belong with *me*."

Garnet locked eyes with him, she wanted so badly to close the tiny gap between them. "I-" She stammered, unable to find the words. "I'll stay with you tonight...I'll see how I feel and decide if I want to leave my housefolk, okay?"

Hornet's eyes shimmered. "That's all I ask." He touched his nose to hers. Garnet closed her eyes and pressed close against Hornet. The two of them walked together, their tails intertwined.

They reached Hornet's camp, there were only a few rogues here along with Jade and Adder. There was their kit Mite and a gray and white tom named Comet. Garnet followed Hornet to his den where they shared a piece of fresh-kill. As the night slowed down, Hornet and Garnet curled up in his nest together.

For the first time in a long time, Garnet felt warm, safe and at home. She loved her housefolk, but maybe she did belong with Hornet.

Garnet stared at the town, feeling incredibly doubtful. She didn't want to leave Hornet, she had spent the night and the entire day with him and she had never had more fun in her life. With a heavy sigh, Garnet turned to Hornet. "I'll see you tomorrow with my answer."

"Please consider everything I've said." Hornet touched his nose to hers once more. "I can't remember the last time I've enjoyed myself so much."

"Neither can I." Garnet looked bashfully at her paws. "I'll see you tomorrow, Hornet." Despite her aching heart, Garnet turned and hurried into the town and back home. She knew that her housefolk would be incredibly worried about her, but part of her honestly didn't care. She just wanted to be back with Hornet already.

"Garnet." As she jumped onto her fence, Garnet heard the voice of Blue. "Get lost again?"

"No," Garnet replied. "I was spending the night with a friend."

"Is this that Hornet cat you told me about?" Blue questioned,

sounding incredibly suspicious.

"It was." Garnet sat down on the fence. "He makes me really happy." Blue narrowed his blind eyes.

"Rogues are bad news, Garnet." Blue warned.

"What do you mean?" Garnet's fur raised up slightly, what did he know?

"They're selfish and violent. They only care about their next meal, not the cats around them. Why do you think I learned how to fight when I was a loner?"

"Hornet isn't violent." Garnet hissed. "He defends his own, but he's never once put me in danger." She stared at her paws. "He's only made me feel loved and welcome. I feel at home when I'm with him." Blue was silent. "I-I think I'm going to live with him."

Blue sighed heavily. "Garnet," The old tom stood up. "I trust your judgement. You are an intelligent young she-cat. If you believe that you are making the right choice then I trust you and if you ever need a place to stay, you can always come to me."

"Thank you, Blue." Garnet purred. "That means so much to me." She looked at her home, which didn't feel like home anymore. *I already have my answer.* Garnet jumped down and began sprinting through the town.

She saw the field on the outskirts of town and ran faster. "Hornet!" She cried out, hoping he was still around. She ran harder, reaching the field and sprinting through the tall grass. "Hornet!" She called out once more.

"Garnet?" She heard his voice a ways away and ran to him. She spotted his tabby pelt through the grass and skidded to a stop in front of him, panting heavily. "Garnet, what's wrong? Is everything alright?"

"Yes," Garnet panted, struggling to catch her breath and speak. "Hornet," She finally found her voice. "Hornet, I want to live with you."

Hornet's eyes lit up like the sun. "That makes me so happy!" Hornet jumped around. "You made the right choice, Garnet." He pressed his nuzzle into pelt. "Thank you."

Garnet stepped back and looked at him, love racing through her veins. She couldn't remember a time she was so happy. "Let's go home." She purred and the two of them walked together, Garnet was ready to start her new life.